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**"A Million
for John Destiny"**

*A novel about a
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attempt to earn a lot of
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**"Three Were
Renegades"**

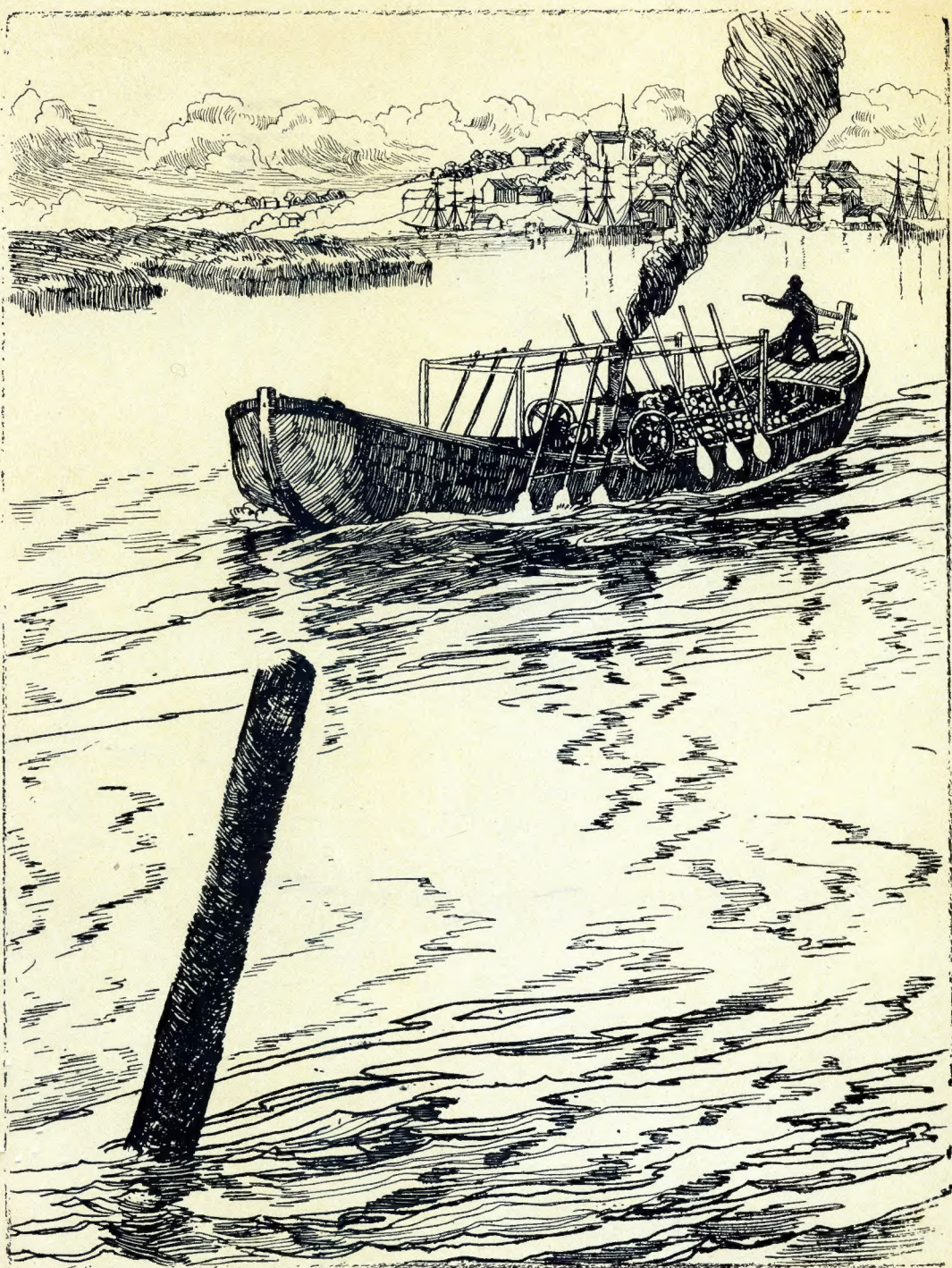
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J. C. Fitch

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BLUE BOOK



DECEMBER, 1938

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Cover Design

Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

Except for stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

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THERE is material for a novel in every person's life, it has been said. Whether this is true or not, we do believe that in the lives of most of us some experience has occurred sufficiently exciting to merit description in print. With this idea in mind we shall be pleased to receive and to print true stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of those accepted each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, an average price of \$50.

In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable.

A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return. As this is a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, Etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912,

of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE published monthly at Dayton, Ohio, for October 1st, 1938.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.

Before me, a Notary in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared John D. Hartman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Treasurer of McCall Corporation, publisher of The Blue Book Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:
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John D. Hartman, Treasurer.

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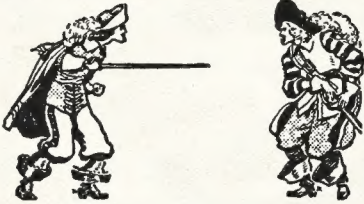
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Gentlemen Unafraid

By MAJOR EDWARD S. O'REILLY

A prize story of Real Experience—the record of a man who faced a firing-squad three times in one day.

IN the various unofficial wars of today, the firing-squad seems to be the final answer to all argument. The old-time military code, which respected the rights of a prisoner of war, seems to have been discarded. In press dispatches, news-reels and pictures, the mass slaughter of the firing-squad is featured as the inevitable last act of every battle.

Somehow I can never read these reports without wincing. I know what it is to stand against the wall and face my executioners. In fact, I stood before the guns of a firing-squad three times in one day; and yet, by a whim of fortune, escaped the lethal volley.

At the time this happened, I was fighting with the insurgent army under General Alvaro Obregon, later to be president of Mexico.

Our victories at Cananea, Naco, Nogales and Magdalena had driven the Huerta federals back into Guaymas, the seaport in the southern end of the states. The Federals had been reinforced and were heavily entrenched, holding the main city and Empalme, a suburb where the railroad shops were located. By shifting forces, bringing superior strength to bear on different points, Obregon had driven the enemy back into the main city and Empalme. For several weeks we had battered away at the Federal army in a series of desperately fought battles. Both sides had suffered heavy losses.

During lulls in the fighting, scouting parties were sent to spy out the land and locate enemy outposts. One day, to relieve the monotony, I joined one of these parties, consisting of three men, a sergeant and two cowboys, one of them a Yaqui Indian. We circled slowly westward above Empalme, studying the Federal line through our field-glasses, and searching for trails used by their patrols.

Night came, and we were many miles from camp. We stopped at a goat-ranch about two miles from the Federal line, intending to finish our work the next morning. The goat-herder and his wife cooked supper of tortillas and beans; we

fed our horses in the corral, and settled down to sleep in the two-room adobe shack. No guard was set, as the Federal scouts seldom ventured abroad at night.

It was near daybreak when I was startled out of a sound sleep by a gruff command, and the light from a lantern shining in my face. Rifle-barrels gleamed in the door and window, and we were ordered to come out with our hands up. We had been betrayed and trapped. It would have been suicide to reach for guns.

As the three soldiers wore the green hat-band of the Sonora rebels, and the sergeant had chevrons on his shirt-sleeve, it was useless to deny that they were soldiers; but I tried a bluff. I declared I was a mining engineer, and had camped at the ranch by accident. In my pocket was a Brunton compass, carried by most miners and prospectors, and in my saddle-bags were a number of mining maps.

DAY was dawning when we were ordered to mount, and our hands were tied to the horns of the saddles. In a sorry parade we were led through the lines into Guaymas and locked in an ancient prison. High ranking officers were called from their beds, and we were given the third degree. The three soldiers were given short shrift. They admitted that they were insurgents, and were thrown back into the cell.

Then my turn came, and I was brought into a room where several officers were seated at a table. I had been stripped to my undershirt and khaki overalls, and all my belongings examined. I repeated my story, declaring that I was a prospector, who by chance had camped at the ranch. The commander of the drum-head court cursed me for a rebel, and declared that I must die.

It was not a cheerful situation; but some of the officers argued for delay. If I was a rebel, it was their patriotic duty to blow my head off; but if I was a peaceful prospector, my execution might cause trouble with the American Government. (Please turn to page 143)



THOUGHTS HAVE WINGS

You Can Influence Others With Your Thinking!

TRY IT SOME TIME. Concentrate intently upon another person seated in a room with you, without his noticing it. Observe him gradually become restless and finally turn and look in your direction. Simple—yet it is a *positive demonstration* that thought generates a mental energy which can be projected from your mind to the consciousness of another. Do you realize how much of your success and happiness in life depend upon your influencing others? Is it not important to you to have others understand your point of view—to be receptive to your proposals?

Demonstrable Facts

How many times have you wished there were some way you could impress another favorably—get across to him or her your ideas? That thoughts can be transmitted, received, and understood by others is now scientifically demonstrable. The tales of miraculous accomplishments of mind by the ancients are now known to be fact—not fable. The method whereby these things can be *intentionally*, not accidentally, accomplished has been a secret long cherished by the Rosicrucians—one of the schools of ancient wisdom existing throughout the world. To thousands everywhere, for centuries, the Rosicrucians have

privately taught this nearly-lost art of the practical use of mind power.

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The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) invite you to explore the powers of your mind. Their sensible, simple suggestions have caused intelligent men and women to soar to new heights of accomplishment. *They will show* you how to use your natural forces and talents to do things you now think are beyond your ability. *Use the coupon below* and send for a copy of the fascinating sealed *free* book, "The Secret Heritage," which explains how you may receive this unique wisdom and benefit by its application to your daily affairs.

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A Million for

THOSE were the eight o'clock feet pounding down the stairs. Every pair had a special character of its own; and Bentley Dewert had learned to recognize them as he lay dreamily in his bed. They began at six with Sergeant O'Hara. Then Mr. Muckle would come pounding down at seven-ten, followed by Johnny Parr and Miss Simms.

Bentley lay there wondering about the owners of the feet. There was some excuse for Sergeant O'Hara, of course; but the others made him angry. Rising and clattering around before eight o'clock in a boarding-house was selfish meanness!

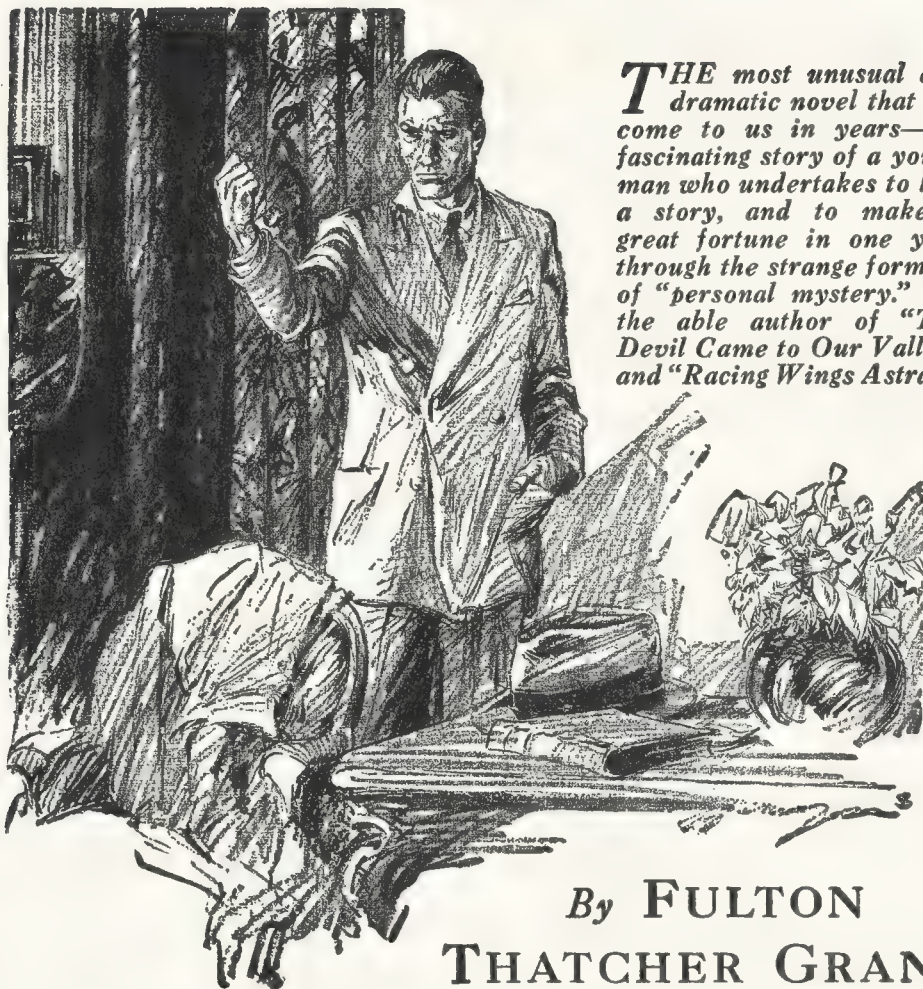
Bentley fought his way out of the bed-clothes at last. Sleep comes late when worry troubles the mind—and Bentley had real worries.

Not the least of these worries lay open on his dresser in the shape of a rather scrawly bit of handwriting on limp rag paper. The letter had been shoved under his door last evening to greet him when he returned from a tiresome, hopeless day of job-hunting. Now he read it again, ruefully, as though through its limp pages Fate were gently thumbing her nose.

"And so," concluded the note, "*you can finish your week in the room, Mr. Dewert, but you will have to go on Saturday unless you have some money or a job faithfully yours (Miss) Mary Rylan.*"

Still dazed, he paced the room, fingered the document, read it again, and crumpled it in his hand desolately.

"And that, little children of the happiness hour," he murmured, "was the end of Mrs. Dewert's little boy."



THE most unusual and dramatic novel that has come to us in years—the fascinating story of a young man who undertakes to live a story, and to make a great fortune in one year through the strange formula of “personal mystery.” By the able author of “The Devil Came to Our Valley” and “Racing Wings Astray.”

By FULTON
THATCHER GRANT

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

John J. Destiny

MISS RYLAN herself, a six-foot Amazon with flaming hair, greeted Bentley as he came through the dining-room door.

“Good marnin’ to ye, Mr. Dewert,” she bellowed. “And how will ye have yer eggs this marnin’?”

“Boiled, please,” said Bentley, possibly inspired in his choice by the safe cleanliness of a virgin shell.

“I see yez have a letter this marnin’, Mr. Dewert,” said Miss Rylan with a defiant intonation. “Meself, I made bold to save it for yez. ’Tis under yer napkin, and I hope there’ll be good news in it.”

It became evident immediately that this was a big moment in the Rylan establishment. Tension filled the room. Every boarder was quite well aware that

Mr. Dewert might, did not some act of God prevent, slip quietly out of their company, to become lost in the great army of the unemployed, exchanging the limited comforts of the hall-bedroom for the more Spartan accommodations of the park bench.

But the moment was quite as big for Bentley himself. Who in thunder, he wondered at once, would write him a letter? The hundreds of advertisements he had answered were long ago buried and lost in days of futile hope. And when, lifting his plate and discovering the long envelope, he read in the upper left-hand corner the imprint of the Ephraim Brood Company, his astonishment was so great that he forgot the others’ curiosity.

That such a firm existed, Bentley was aware, for their Sudso Soap was famous.

Its advertising was to be seen everywhere. But why should this soap company come unsolicited into his life?

Nor was his astonishment lessened by the brief typewritten text.

Dear Sir:

Your name has been mentioned to me by Mr. J. C. Hartswell of the New York *Chronicle* staff, in connection with a position which I am holding open. If interested, present yourself at this office tomorrow morning (Wednesday) at precisely nine-thirty.

Yours truly,
Ephraim Brood, President.

While Bentley had been reading the letter, there had been no sound in the room. Not even Miss Rylan had withdrawn into her kitchen to produce his boiled egg, but rather had stood, shifting her considerable weight from one foot to the other, making no attempt to conceal her curiosity. Now Bentley turned and said innocently to her:

"Tell me, Miss Rylan, do you know what *Eureka* means?"

A jarring question, that, and it brought a frown of concentration to the good Irishwoman's face.

"Sure," she said tentatively, "it's the name on a vacuum-cleaner, and—"

Bentley shook his head solemnly.

"Wrong, Miss Rylan," he said. "It's a word from the forgotten language of Oom, and it means, '*Never mind the eggs, Miss Rylan; I've got a job.*'"

Whereupon he turned and strode out of the room, conscious of having left an impression behind him.

AT first glance, the letter had been puzzling, but not alarming. It was while riding downtown in the subway that misgivings were born, and with some reason. What kind of job, he wondered, could a soap company have for him? And what, which was more obscure, could he, an ex-reporter on a newspaper, and an embryonic writer of the Great American Novel (still unborn), hope to offer a soap company? There must be, he felt, a catch to it.

And if there was a catch, it would be that mention of J. C. Hartswell's name in the letter. Hartswell was city editor of the *Chronicle*, a hard, stern, caustic fellow for whom Bentley had little or no affection. It had been this same Hartswell who, three weeks ago, had discharged Bentley from the staff of that newspaper.

"Old Hartswell," he said to himself, "wouldn't recommend me for anything short of a dose of poison."

CONCERNING his prowess as a newspaper man, Bentley had no illusions. He had begun a career on the *Chronicle* six months earlier, the job having been given him through a letter of recommendation by a family friend with a certain influence. He had not shown himself competent. He had been assigned to shipping news (a job not at all to his liking) because Hartswell had seen in him a bright, eager and personable young man, worthy of a fair trial. He had been tolerated for a while, but the ax had hovered over him for some time, and finally it fell.

"Dewert," old Hartswell had growled at him that day, "you're through. I'm sorry, and all that, but you'll never make a reporter. No news-sense. Wouldn't know a story if it spit in your face. Like you personally, Dewert, but I can't cover you any longer. You'd better look for a homely girl with a million dollars and try to write fiction. Good luck, son. Drop in and see us sometime."

So, in view of that dismissal, this "recommendation" of Hartswell's seemed an ironical thing. Just one of old Hartswell's mean gags, that's all. Still, he'd better have a look.

He located the soap-company offices on the sixteenth floor of an old building in the lower thirties, occupying the entire floor and rubbing its soapy elbows with the textile trade. The entrance was dismal. There was an ancient elevator which might have been a miracle to its pre-war inventor, but was only a rattling cage of certain death to Bentley Dewert.

He arrived, however, after a slow ascent, at his destination, and addressed himself to a mechanical lady in a glass cell who seemed almost a part and parcel of the switchboard that confronted her. He spoke to her through a square hole in the glass, producing almost no response from the automaton who merely demanded, in a tinny, metallic voice:

"Name, please?"

He gave his name. He watched her vindictive stabbing of the plugs in her switchboard. Her voice said sharply:

"Take a seat, please." Then she promptly forgot all about him. Or so it appeared.

Fifteen, twenty, twenty-five minutes of waiting, and there was panic in him.



Sleep comes late when worry troubles the mind—and Bentley had real worries.

What could a soap company want with him? Or he with it? Or either with old Hartswell? And of all soap companies, he was sure, this would be the worst.

Then, as though to prove this, a soapy youth issued from behind a partition and beckoned to Bentley, who followed until after a maze of partitions and doors, the youth inserted his head into one frosted glass portal and called out Bentley's name, then stepped aside to let the visitor pass.

The office within was cold, bare, impersonal. It appeared, at first glance, to be empty, but Bentley's eyes finally caught sight of a little manikin sitting behind an immense oaken desk and staring at him with fixed intensity. "Unreal" was the adjective that filled Bentley's thoughts, and the little man seemed altogether that. His head was large and bulgy. His eyes were too small and too near together. And as he presently scrambled to his feet to offer Bentley a greeting, it was plain that he was not much taller standing than sitting down. Not young, Bentley guessed. In his late fifties, perhaps, or even older. The mouth was hard and square, and his face was patterned with a network of tiny wrinkles like the skin of a salt-water fisherman. And there was a metallic quality that rang in his voice as he commanded:

"Sit down, Dewert." He indicated an empty chair which faced his desk.

Bentley took the seat. Followed a silence during which the manikin never relaxed staring. Suddenly he snapped:

"Hartswell says you're a rotten reporter. That right?"

"I guess so," admitted Bentley, filling with indignation. He resented the observation. Especially he resented this little dumpling of a man, and wanted none of his jobs, whatever they might be.

"Says you want to write fiction. That true?"

"Yes." Monosyllables now.

"Says you've wasted your time fooling around Europe. Never *lived* anything. Says you drool artiness. Got ability but can't use it. . . . Listen, I know Hartswell. Good man. Known him for years. Same club and all that. I trust his word. Thinks you'll write a good book some day if you ever grow up. Thinks you need a good slab of life. Shake you loose from yourself. Make a man of you."

Now this was too much for Bentley's already raw temper. Soap-company presidents have their place and purpose, but they don't rate getting personal like this.

"Listen, Mr. Brood," he ground out. "That seems to be my business. I don't have to sit here and listen to a catalogue of my shortcomings from any—"

THE little man cut through his sentence as through tissue.

"And so he fired you, and now you're broke and want a job. That right?"

"No," said Bentley flatly, "that isn't just right." He wouldn't be browbeaten by this miniature Napoleon of soap! "We're just wasting time, Mr. Brood. I want a job, all right, but not in your soap factory. Get that straight. I'm not qualified; and what's more, I don't want to be. Maybe I'm a flop as a newspaper man, but I can still pick my own jobs—"

Smarting under the sting of truth, Bentley had got to his feet, but the little man's fist crashed on the desk.

"Shut up and sit down!" he roared. "Don't be so damned sensitive, Dewert. I don't waste time on euphemisms. Facts are facts, and the fact about you is you're a flop—as you said. That sums



"You are a failure. I'm a success. Know why?"

you up. Who said anything about a soap company? You want to write, but you need material. Now, I'm going to give you material. And time. And money. How d'you like that?"

Fierce little man, he was. Bentley sat down and was silent, more because the man's violent and surprising speech stole his words, than through his own volition. He stared at Brood as though at some strange phenomenon.

"You," the man went on, "are a failure. I'm a success. Know why?"

"I wouldn't," said Bentley bitterly, "be here if I did."

"Right. I'll tell you why: Because I own the secret of success, and you don't. Nobody else does. Nobody ever figured it out, but I did. And that's where you come in."

"Me?" Bentley was incredulous.

"Yes, you. You're going to prove it. Going to prove my formula for success. Going to make a million dollars. Make it in a year or less, too. Now paste that in your hat."

PASTING it, Bentley said nothing at all. He was beginning to suspect this homunculus of hallucinations. Better keep still—merely say nothing and get out when he could.

But the little man was started now.

"Simple as A.B.C., my formula is," he rambled on, caught up in a sort of fanatical enthusiasm. I call it 'Personal Mystery.' Know what that is?"

"No," Bentley replied with truth.

"Ever read 'the Count of Monte Cristo?'"

Bentley nodded. Best to humor the little crank.

"Then you've seen it work. Dumas used my formula. Personal mystery made the simple sailor, *Edmond Dantes*,

over into the magnificent *Monte Cristo*. Learned the trick from the *Abbé Faria*. Let people *imagine* things about him, that's what. Didn't talk about himself. So people were afraid of him because they couldn't figure him out. Personal mystery, boy!"

Now, there was a certain logic in all this. Resent as he might this queer little old man's manner and his superlative impudence, Bentley could not but admit that he "had something there." And he was not through yet.

"Just plain psychology; that's what Personal Mystery is," he was asserting. "Old as Moses, only nobody ever made a doctrine out of it before. Keep your mouth shut and your eyes open; don't talk about yourself, and people will be afraid of you. Why? Because they're jealous of what you *might* be. Because everybody has an inferiority complex, and when they can't get anything on you, they figure you for being bigger'n' better'n' they are. Human nature, boy. Everybody's scared of everybody else—jealous, too. Apples in your neighbor's orchard always sweeter'n yours. That's the formula—let folks imagine things about you. They will, too, if you shut up and don't spoil it. Better for a man to shut up and get taken for a fool, than to talk a lot and prove he is one. And if you shut up and give folks a chance, they'll make you out twice as important as you really are. Personal Mystery; that's it. Greatest force in the world!"

The voice of Ephraim Brood was rising and falling with excitement, and at the last it went up in a great crescendo. He was glowing now, and inspired. There was about him an earnestness that seemed to catch Bentley up, as by infection, and carry him on wings of enthusiasm. And when Brood paused for breath, he heard himself saying:

"Very interesting, Mr. Brood. Very interesting indeed, but—well, just how does it concern me?" A fair question, certainly. But Brood's answer, a question in return, was a total surprise.

"Ever hear of a ghost-writer?" he demanded, leaning across his desk and glaring in a sort of defiance.

"Yes," said Bentley. "And if that's your idea for me, I'm not interested. I'm not going to ghost-write your life-and-work, Mr. Brood. I don't need a job that bad. If that's your gag—"

But Brood cut him off sharply.

"Who said you were?" he snapped. "Don't want a ghost-writer. Want a

ghost-actor. Going to write a book myself, not you. You're going to *act* it."

"Huh?"

"That's it. You'll act, not write it. Going to give my formula to the world. Need a stooge—somebody to *live* that book. While I write it! That's your job. Pay you money to be my stooge. You're a puppet. I pull strings. Besides, you'll make a million dollars. That's the proof of the formula. And you get paid while you make it, Dewert. How's that for a job? Want it? Ghost-actor, not *writer*."

IT was all too much for Bentley. It stifled him. He managed to gasp:

"Now wait a minute, Mr. Brood. Let's get this straight! Say that once more for me, so I can be sure I heard it."

"All right, boy, ask questions," said the surprising little man, nodding now. "I want to hire you to live my book before I write it. I think up situations, and put you in 'em. You solve 'em—by Personal Mystery. I write down what happens to you. Make a living success-story. Make you a million dollars in a year. Greatest book ever written, Dewert. Never was such a book. Got the idea now? Ghost-actor!"

Bentley was unable to reply, and the little man went on, almost as though talking to himself:

"You make your million, I take ten per cent. That's my profit. I give you plenty money to live on and do what I want while you're making my book. You live high, too. That's my risk. Give you a contract, Dewert. Biggest chance a writer ever had. You want to write, eh? All right, now you can cut yourself a slice of adventure. Never was a proposition like that, boy. Now what d'you say, take the job?"

"I'll tell you what I say, Mr. Brood," Bentley managed to articulate at last. "I say it isn't possible, and it isn't even real. I don't even believe you said it. But if you say it once more, Mr. Brood, I'll take your job. I just dare you to offer it again."

Brood laughed harshly. Then his voice softened a little.

"It took me forty years of hard work, boy, to make my pile," he said. "Now I know I could have done it in a year. Think of that, boy! I want to prove that. Want to give my formula to the world. Soap's not important, but this thing is big. I'm an old man now, Dewert. Anything might happen to me.



"I wouldn't," said Bentley bitterly, "be here if I did."

Want the world to remember Ephraim Brood, boy. Want to do one big thing before I die. This is it, see? Only I need help. I'll pay you to help me. That's pretty sane, isn't it, eh? Nothing screwy about that, eh?"

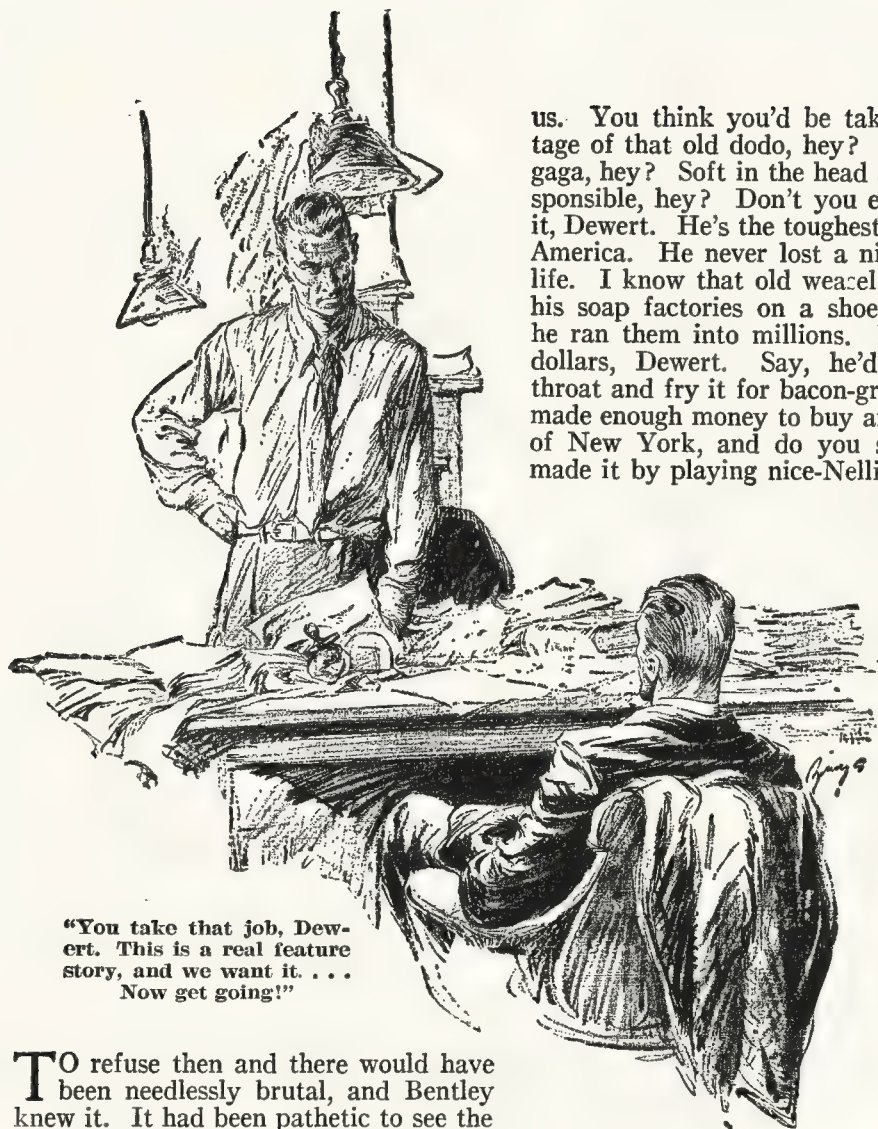
And very suddenly Bentley felt the pathos of it, the tragedy of an aging little man wanting passionately to be big and noble and important. Very suddenly he was a little sorry for him. It was as though a human soul were suddenly spread out naked on the oak desk in front of him. He felt like a Peeping Tom, staring into Brood's forbidden secret windows. There was wistfulness in the man now, and the surface hardness was slipping away.

"You can't," Bentley told himself, "slap the fellow down. Can't just rebuff and hurt him. But you can't take money from a poor senile old crank suffering from delusions." Perhaps he ought not to think of taking this crazy job at all—and yet perhaps he ought to pretend. Better to be gentle—better to do it gradually. Find the kindest way out. So he said:

"Well, Mr. Brood, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'd like to think this over. I don't want to make snap decisions."

Brood fairly pounced on him.

"That's right. That's right, boy!" he cried with child-like eagerness. "Think it over. Come back here at two o'clock this afternoon. I'll have a contract ready. You can start today. Don't want to waste time. I've got the first situation all ready for you. Time's important, Dewert. Every minute counts, for a man my age. Tell you what: you go see Hartswell. He wants to see you, anyhow. Told me so. Go see Hartswell before you decide. Have a good talk with him, and then come back here—at two."



"You take that job, Dewert. This is a real feature story, and we want it. . . . Now get going!"

TO refuse then and there would have been needlessly brutal, and Bentley knew it. It had been pathetic to see the little man's hard crust crumble and fall away, and to see the boyish, romantic soul of him peeking timidly through. Better wait, he decided. He could always telephone or something. Let him down easier. Maybe he would go see Hartswell, at that. Like to tell that old sour-pan something.

They were on their feet now, and Brood was holding the door open for him. He laid his hand on Bentley's arm.

"I'm counting on you, Dewert," he said. "This is a big thing to me. Tremendous big thing. Biggest thing in an old man's life."

CHAPTER II

J. C. HARTSWELL, the *Chronicle's* burly city-editor, was blunt, emphatic and vociferous.

"Don't," he was bellowing, "be a damn' fool, Dewert. Don't try to go noble on

us. You think you'd be taking advantage of that old dodo, hey? Think he's gaga, hey? Soft in the head and not responsible, hey? Don't you ever believe it, Dewert. He's the toughest old guy in America. He never lost a nickel in his life. I know that old weasel. He built his soap factories on a shoestring, and he ran them into millions. Millions of dollars, Dewert. Say, he'd cut your throat and fry it for bacon-grease. He's made enough money to buy and sell half of New York, and do you suppose he made it by playing nice-Nellie? He's a

holy terror, that little old goat. I've known him for ten years."

"But—" Bentley tried to cut in.

"Brood's queer, but he's a grand old guy, and I respect him," the newspaper man went on. "I used to think he was cracked, but I learned different. He's the McCoy, Dewert. And that Personal Mystery gag of his is okay. You can't laugh it off; there's something in it. And say, didn't he mention something about ten per cent for himself? Sure he did. He'll sew you up in a contract so tight your own mother can't own you for a year. Say, Dewert, you couldn't take advantage of old Brood if you tried. Not if you were quadruplets."

He paused here, but only for breath, then went on:

"You take that job, Dewert. That's an assignment from the *Chronicle*. I want that story. Exclusive, see? Did you ever know me to drool the milk of

human kindness? No, you didn't. This is a real feature story, Dewert, and we want it. That's news, Dewert. That's a man biting a dog. You're the man; Brood's the dog. You go bite him. I'll give you five thousand dollars cash for that story when you finish it. *'How I lived a book,'* that's your story, Dewert. I'll give you five hundred dollars for an option right now. Take this voucher and go get it at the cashier's. Five hundred bucks, Dewert. That's a good start. I mean business. Go on, now, get to hell out of here."

"Well," Bentley said slowly, "if you put it that way—"

"You're damned right I put it that way. This is the best assignment any newspaper man ever had since Bennett told Stanley to go find Livingston. Now get going."

And Bentley got going.

IT was a taxicab that carried him uptown to Miss Rylan's boarding establishment. He located the stalwart Irish-woman amid her dusting and astonished her with:

"I'm leaving, Miss Rylan. But I'm paying for the three weeks' board I owe you, and I'm adding enough more to pay for six months at half-rate without board. I want you to hold my room for me and keep all my things in it—just in case."

The good woman was startled.

"Lord love ye, Mr. Dewert," she cried, seeing the wallet full of money, "sure, ye'd not be robbing a bank, would ye, now? And you leavin' yer things here like that? 'Tis not jail ye're goin' to, belike, for six months?"

Bentley grinned.

"Not quite," he said. "But I'll not be needing my things where I'm going, just the same."

Her imagination was fertile, and a little morbid.

"Ye'd not be doin' away with yer-self?"

"I'm not contemplating suicide," he said. "Not exactly. I'm taking a job."

"And what job is it now?"

"I'm becoming a ghost," he said solemnly, and she crossed herself.

"Holy Mother Mary! A ghost, is it? Sit down, boy, and I'll be calling Doctor Reilly for yez." She was convinced that Bentley was suffering from some strange sickness of mind and perhaps of body.

"Thank you, Miss Rylan," he told her. "But I'm not ill. And I'll not be a dead

ghost. A *live* ghost, Miss Rylan. A happy ghost. One of the better ghosts, Miss Rylan. A member of the better Haunting Clubs, indeed."

"'Tis daft ye are entirely."

"I," said Bentley, "am inclined to think you're right, but I'm enjoying it. So good afternoon, Miss Rylan, and don't forget to hold my room."

Whereupon he walked jauntily out, his toes touching only the uppermost clouds of a clear, bright sky. . . .

Ephraim Brood stood behind his desk, watch in hand.

"Late, Dewert," he glowered. "Half a minute late. You'll do better than that when you work for me." But then the harshness melted out of his voice, and the old man held out his hand to Bentley with something like affection.

"Here's your contract, boy," he said, reaching for a sheet of foolscap which lay on his desk. "Better read it all through. Never sign anything you don't read."

"What makes you think I'm going to sign, Mr. Brood?"

Bentley could afford to temporize a little now.

"Because you aren't a fool, boy," Brood snapped at him. "Because I know you talked with Hartswell. Because he paid you five hundred dollars' option on a story. Because—dammit, boy, stop fooling around. Look at that contract while I read it. Don't waste time. Watch it, now."

BENTLEY held the contract in his hand, but his mind refused to focus. A fog of bewilderment filled his brain, and it was as though from a muffled distance that he seemed to get snatches of Brood's voice patiently reading, while his own copy seemed to be typed in vague gray ink.

"... Valid for one year or until you shall have accumulated a sum of money or assets equal to one million dollars U. S. currency," the voice was saying. "Absolute obedience," Dewert. "You're bound to be like an actor to a producer—belong to me. . . . I take ten per cent of your earnings—you pay back at end of year all the cash I advance. . . . Contract is void if you refuse any assignment or don't follow out Personal Mystery formula. . . . That case, you owe me all money I have advanced to date. . . . That clear, Dewert?"

No—it was not clear. Nothing was very clear. But out of the gray that en-

shrouded him, Bentley faintly heard his own voice answering:

"I—I think so, sir. . . . Seems fair."

"Of course it's fair," Brood rasped. "Think I'd let you just milk me? Think I'm an irresponsible old fool? Not on your life, boy. Now sign these two papers, Dewert. Original and duplicate. Right there, boy. Fine. That's fine. Now you belong to me. My stooge, Dewert. Now listen: We'll get down to the first situation. Start in right away. No time to lose."

("Too fast, too fast!" Bentley wanted to cry out. He wanted time to consider. But the little man's voice grated on.)

"Here's five hundred dollars. Cash, Dewert."

He was pulling out a handful of crisp new bills from a fat old-fashioned billfold, and laying them pains-takingly on the desk.

"FOUR hundreds and ten tens," he said. "That's your capital. You're an average young man coming to New York. Want to make this a typical case. Five hundred is all you've got in the world. You're going to run it into a million. So now what do you do? You tell me. I want to see how much imagination you've got."

Bentley's stare was blankness itself.

"Why—I—huh?" He was inarticulate, but Brood was doing the talking for both.

"I'll tell you, Dewert. First thing you do is get clothes. Got to make an impression. You buy clothes and put up in the best hotel. Take Washington Towers, why not? Important people stay there, don't they? Got to find important people, Dewert. Can't afford to be cheap. Get the idea?"

"Why—kind of. I—I guess so," said Bentley, fumbling with it and wondering how in thunder the old man had been so sure he would take the job anyway.

"All right, then. Next, you use Personal Mystery to make the acquaintance of somebody staying at that hotel. Somebody important. Somebody who will be useful to you. Stepping-stone to your million, boy. No use impressing nobodies."

"What kind of a person?"

"Doesn't matter. Anybody useful. Find out who's there. Might be a Senator. Might be an industrialist. Diplomat, maybe. All kinds of people stay at the Washington Towers. Leave that up to you. Want to be natural in this book. Hartswell says you've got imagination.

Up to you to use it. I'm paying you for it."

Sudden decision swept over Bentley.

"Okay, Mr. Brood," he said. "I'm on. Now I find me a man and I make his acquaintance. Then what?"

"Use Personal Mystery on him. Keep your mouth shut and let him figure you out. He'll figure you big. They always do. Don't need to lie. Just shut up. They do their own lying to themselves. Personal Mystery does it, Dewert. I want to prove that. Human nature does it all. You've got to believe this thing, Dewert. Got to have faith. Personal Mystery's like a religion. Works if you believe in it and if you let it work. You can afford to have faith now, Dewert. You've got enough money. And if you run out of cash, I'll give you more. But five hundred ought to be enough. That's average. That's fair. That's what a boy might have starting off to make his fortune these days. You just go and meet your man and let Personal Mystery do the rest. You'll find things will happen. Lots of things. Queer things, maybe. Exciting things. Possibly dangerous things. That's just what I want. And I want you to give me a complete report once a month regularly, and also whenever you think you have solved any situation by Personal Mystery. Want all the details."

"Well, sir," said Bentley, now thoroughly aroused and eager. "It sounds pretty exciting, the way you put it."

"It *is* exciting. Greatest adventure any boy ever had. And it will make the greatest book ever written."

"THERE'S just one thing, Mr. Brood —" Bentley was a little hesitant. "Now, I've got a mother living. She thinks a lot of me, and she thinks a lot of our name. Back in Massachusetts where we come from, it's a good name, Mr. Brood. I wouldn't want anything to—"

"Don't use it, Dewert. Get another name. Any name will do. *Jones* or *Smith* or *Brown* or something. Leave that up to you, boy. Appreciate how you feel. Wouldn't want to hurt your mother or your family. Also you're a new man now. Starting on a new destiny. Better start clean and bright with a new name. You're Destiny's own grandchild, Dewert. Don't forget that, boy."

Bentley grinned suddenly.

"Not likely I'll forget it, Mr. Brood," he said. "And that remark of yours gives me my name."



"Make it ten, Mister, an' I don't care if you are a phony. But I aint takin' no chances: give me five now."

"Huh? What name, boy?"

"Destiny. From now on, as you said, I'm Destiny's own grandchild. I'm young John J. Destiny himself. Young Kid Destiny, starting off for the wars. That's me, from now on, Mr. Brood. John J. Destiny!"

And with that he turned and walked out of the door, leaving astonishment on the face of the old man behind him.

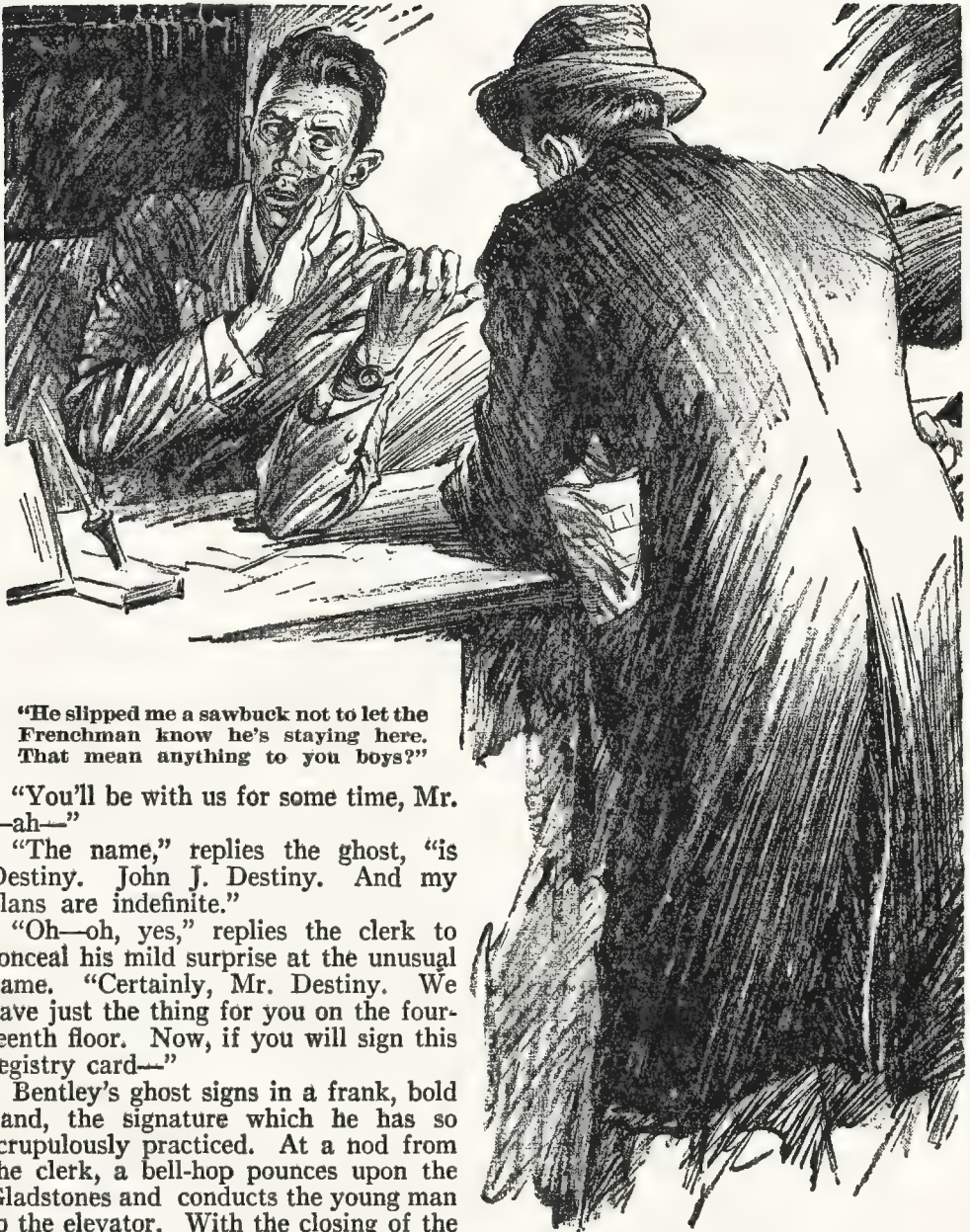
LATE afternoon, now. . . . New York is slimy and dripping with rain. In front of the Hotel Washington Towers, two taxicabs are jockeying for position at the curb. The green cab finally out-noses the yellow one by mere inches, reaching the canopied entrance under a barrage of rich, full-mouthed profanity from the latter's driver. A squad of bell-hops materializes. Eager hands snatch at two shiny new Gladstones inside the car. A statuesque door-man, uniformed like an admiral in the Imperial Russian Navy, lumbers down to shelter the cab's fare under his great red umbrella.

As to the cab's passenger, he is a ghost. But the bell-hops, door-men and chauffeurs have no suspicion of this fact.

They see him, visually, but they discover nothing amiss in him. Nor does the unctuous room-clerk in the hotel's lobby seem aware that the young man who confronts him is different than the thousands of other young men who, presumably, have so confronted him daily. Indeed, there is nothing filmy or translucent about this ghost. His substance is surprisingly solid. He is well-dressed, bright, alert and does not wear that sad, harassed look for which disembodied spirits are noted. Yet ghost he is, for all his deceptive appearance, the ghost of Bentley Dewert, transfigured and transformed in his present state, until not even his own mother—or yet Miss Rylan, which is more to the point—would have recognized him.

His new coat is of best yellow camel's hair. His new suit is of best brown chevriot. His equally new soft hat is worn at an angle to be described as jaunty if not aggressive. All in all, he seems a fairly vigorous sort of ghost. Certainly a pleasant ghost, and rather attractive.

"Give me," demands this young ghost with well-carried ease, "something with drawing-room and bath."



"He slipped me a sawbuck not to let the Frenchman know he's staying here. That mean anything to you boys?"

"You'll be with us for some time, Mr. —ah—"

"The name," replies the ghost, "is Destiny. John J. Destiny. And my plans are indefinite."

"Oh—oh, yes," replies the clerk to conceal his mild surprise at the unusual name. "Certainly, Mr. Destiny. We have just the thing for you on the fourteenth floor. Now, if you will sign this registry card—"

Bentley's ghost signs in a frank, bold hand, the signature which he has so scrupulously practiced. At a nod from the clerk, a bell-hop pounces upon the Gladstones and conducts the young man to the elevator. With the closing of the elevator door, this scene is ended, save for the arched eyebrows of the room-clerk, whose practiced glance observes that Bentley's bags are heavily plastered with all manner of tags, touristic labels and steamship pasters, suggesting that this comely young spirit has just arrived from a transatlantic voyage, which is not at all the case. And with the departure of the elevator comes the arrival of the occupants of the second cab, amid a scurrying array of bellboys whose much zeal suggests that these two gentlemen are important guests.

IT must be said for Bentley Dewert that he was an honest employee. He was not one to neglect the business in

hand for which he was paid. To the contrary, as soon as his unpacking was accomplished, he seated himself and proceeded to the examination of the next step in his extraordinary procedure.

Actually, it was not a simple thing. It *sounded* easy. It had a simple formula about it when old Ephraim Brood had given him his instruction. All he had to do, he knew, was to "make the acquaintance of some person of importance staying at the hotel." Fair enough, that. But whose acquaintance, and how?

He pondered this problem for half an hour or so, and his face was drawn into a baffled expression. At length, however, his features relaxed, decision replacing



uncertainty upon them. The broad grin returned as he reached for the telephone receiver and called the service desk to demand a house-boy.

Presently the boy appeared. Hard little urchins, these hotel boys. They begin their fight for existence early in life. Their school is one of hard knocks, and their credo one of complete disillusionment. And this boy was true to type, half-pint in size, with ruddy hair and cold suspicious eyes. The very buttons of his snug uniform shone with sophistication and knowingness.

"Boy," said Bentley, after the lad had duly knocked and entered, "what would you do for five dollars?"

Magic words! The tough little face lighted up.

"Huh? Say, Mister, just try me!"

"Well, son, there are some big-shots stopping at this hotel, and I want their names. I don't want to ask for them at the desk, see? Get me? I mean the real

big ones—bankers, big operators, industrialists. No pikers, son. You get me those names, and you earn a five-spot."

ABRUPTLY the boy's eagerness faded into suspicion. He had been around, this boy. He had heard about rackets, con-games and the other means of get-rich quick living; and this queer proposal smacked heavily of rackets.

"What's yer gag, Mister?" he cannily demanded.

Bentley feigned surprise.

"Gag?" he repeated. "No gag at all!"

"Oh, yeah?" The boy was cagey. "Then whaddya want them names for, a shake-down?"

Bentley took on a confidential manner.

"Listen, son," he said easily, to the accompaniment of a wink, "I'm going to send them all valentines."

"Yeah?" The boy was incredulous, but it gave him a chance to drive his bargain. "Make it ten, Mister, an' I don't care if you are a phony."

Bentley shook his head sadly.

"Yours is a suspicious nature, son," he said. "But we'll settle for a ten-spot. Get me those names."

Still the boy hesitated.

"I don't wanna get into no jam," he said. "I aint takin' no chances, Mister. Gimme five bucks now."

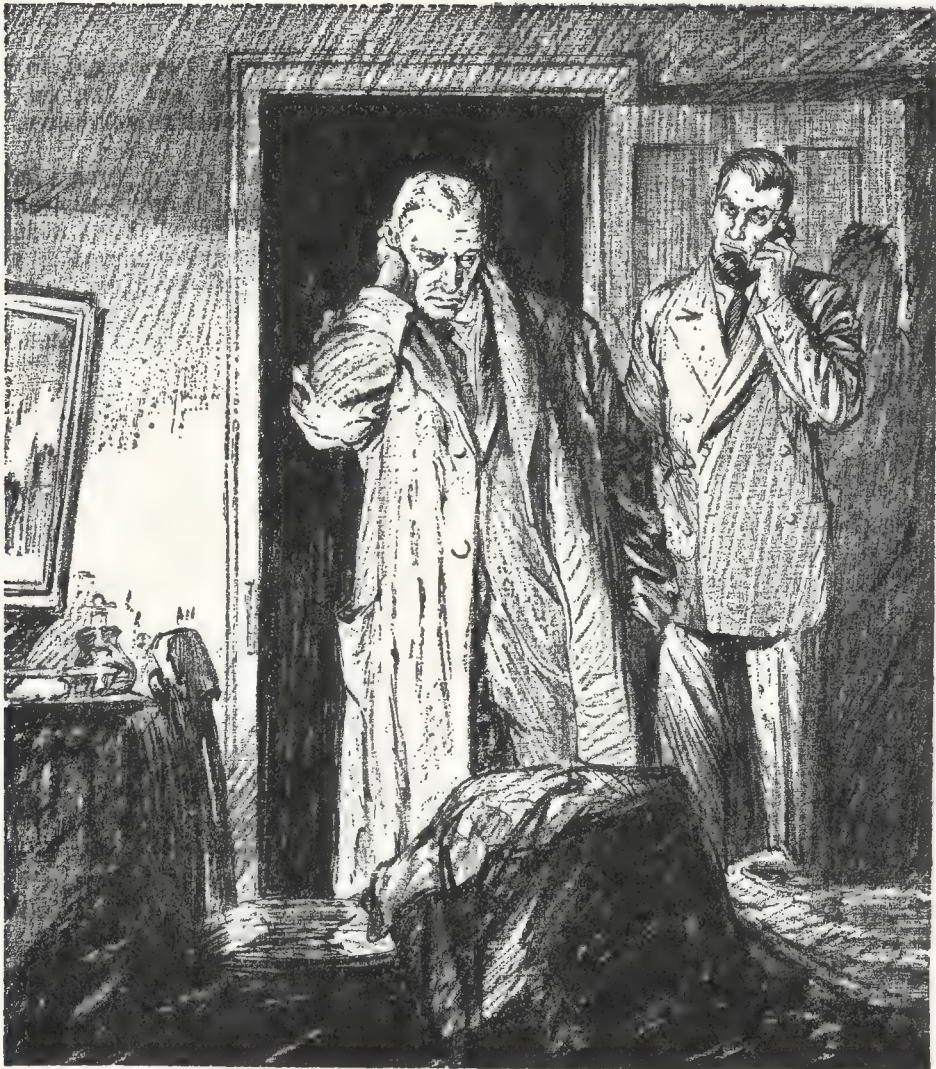
Bentley sighed. He was learning about modern youth. He drew out his wallet and peeled off two brand-new five-dollar bills, one of which he handed to the boy, who examined it with unconcealed suspicion, bit it, tore it a little and possibly tasted it. But apparently he was satisfied at length, and pocketing the bill, he shuffled toward the door, saying:

"Be seein' yuh, boss." And Bentley heard him, through the closed door, muttering: "Valentines, huh? Baloney!"

It is not known by just what method the boy succeeded in obtaining the wanted names, but obtain them he did, and quickly, too. Scarcely thirty minutes had elapsed before his knock rattled on the door, and he stood there clutching a piece of crumpled hotel stationery and saying with evident distrust:

"I got 'em, Mister—only, you're gonna make a copy. You aint gonna get nothin' with my writin' on it, see? I don't wanna lose my job."

Bentley copied the list. It was not a long one. The field of human activity which it suggested was not broad. All in all, there were only six names. Still, these were unquestionably significant



Hartlow, listening unavoidably, stared queerly but made no comment.

names. The boy, it seemed, had caught on. Big-shots were wanted, and he had delivered big-shots.

The list copied, the bell-hop tore up his own list, saying flatly:

"Okay. Now gimme, Mister."

Bentley gave. The boy departed, richer by ten dollars and a new experience. And Bentley lost himself in the study of these fate-laden names.

The list read:

Charles R. Knoxley, President Silco Steel Corp. (Room 3420)

Amos L. Ludwell, banker. (Room 1104)

Camille Archambault, French Undersecretary for Aviation (Room 888)

Sir Humphrey Dewies, Anglo-American Cotton, Ltd., (Room 1375)

Hon. Marvin E. Feld (Senator, Mass. Repub.) (Room 1000)

Lola Pattou, screen star (Room 2455)

After going over them three times, each time with a deepening frown, Bentley thrust the list from him, murmuring:

"There it is—the sucker-list of Destiny. But who is going to be the victim?"

There was no easy answer to that. He pondered over each again for many minutes and found himself no nearer decision than at first. Finally he resolved to leave the entire choice to Fate. He drew out his fountain pen, closed his eyes, and let the point fall onto the list at random. When he looked again, there was a tiny blot which almost obscured the "r" in the name *Archambault*, third on his list.

"So," he mused, "the sucker is a Frenchman. Well, anyhow, I can talk his language. Now for a little Personal Mystery."

He donned his jacket again, straightened his tie, flicked an imaginary bit of

dust from his lapel, approved his appearance once more in the mirror, left his room briskly and went down the elevator to the lobby.

"I want," he said to the clerk, with a confidential manner, "to ask you a favor."

"Certainly," said the clerk. "Anything at all, sir."

"There is a man," said Bentley, "named Archambault, staying here at your hotel. He's a French aviation official. How long has he been here?"

The clerk's smile froze.

"We do not," he said with tremendous dignity, "give out information concerning our guests."

Bentley grinned inwardly, remembering the bell-hop and his ten-dollar list; but he only said:

"Naturally, naturally! What I want is really quite simple. I have reasons why I prefer that M. Archambault shall not discover that I am staying here. I want you to assure me that my incognito can be preserved—as far as he is concerned, at least."

At this point Bentley leaned over the counter and thrust a ten-dollar bill out where it would be covertly visible to the clerk.

"I want to be sure," he said, "that Archambault never even suspects I'm here—even if he should inquire directly."

"Oh, as to that," the clerk said suavely, "you may be quite sure. You can entirely rely on my discretion."

THE ten dollars changed hands without ostentation, and Bentley left the counter and returned to his rooms, while the clerk stared after his retreating figure with an expression of complete wonderment upon his chinless face. There was, he sensed, a mystery in this comely young man. Dark mystery—doubtful mystery. Guests at the Hotel Washington Towers do not, as a rule, go about bribing the personnel to guard their incognito. This must be looked into.

No great time elapsed after the clerk's first shock of alarm at the young guest's behavior before the daily press entered into the situation, dripping through the door and across the tiles of the lobby. The press was represented by two reporters from the morning *Ledger*, Messrs. O'Connell and Storms, both feeling the flair of news-scent in trained nostrils.

"Hi, Silky," Storms said familiarly, "where's this Frog diplomat called Archambault? Aviation official. We want him. Where's his room?"

Now, press and hotels are mingled in a sort of mutual agreement, unwritten but real. From city hotels the press can draw much news of value; whereas a friendly press can—and often does—give unpaid-for publicity of a helpful nature to hotels whose officials coöperate with their reporters. On the other hand, an unfriendly press can ruin, in a single paragraph, long years of carefully built hotel trade. And it was with this knowledge in his mind that the clerk replied guardedly:

"Yes, we do have a guest by that name, and he might be the one you want; only—only, he won't see you. Left special orders to let no one come up. He has a secretary who—"

"Nuts, brother," said reporter O'Connell succinctly. "We don't deal in secretaries. We want the hot-shot, and we'll get him. What's the room?"

"Well—ah—he's in 888; but remember, I never told you."

"Sure you didn't. Never even saw us come in. Okay, pal, we'll buy you a drink sometime."

And both young men started determinedly toward the elevators.

"Hey, wait a minute," called the clerk. "Come back here."

And they came.

"Listen," he said mysteriously, "did you fellers ever hear of a guy named Destiny?"

"Lay off the wise-cracks, buddy," urged reporter Storms. "We're busy."

"That's no wise-crack. There is a feller registered here by that name—John J. Destiny. He came only a couple of minutes before Archambault. Maybe he crossed with him on the *Ile de France*. Anyhow, he's got plenty of tourist labels on his bags. And listen, he just pulled a queer one on me."

"Huh? Queer?"

"Slipped me a sawbuck not to let the Frenchman know he's staying here. That mean anything to you boys?"

Storms eyed O'Connell. O'Connell eyed Storms. Both nodded wisely. Together they said:

"Silky, if it means what we think it does, you get that drink, and it'll be champagne."

Then they ran to the waiting elevator.

BENTLEY'S door-buzzer signaled, a few minutes later; upon responding, he was confronted by Storms and O'Connell. Furthermore, at the very first glance he knew them for what they were. There is a certain be-damned-to-



you look about newspaper men which is unmistakable. And Bentley realized that Personal Mystery was already at work.

"Well," he managed to say soberly, "what can I do for you?"

"We're from the *Ledger*," replied Storms. "You're John J. Destiny?"

"I can't prove it," said Bentley; "but I am."

"Can we come in?"

Bentley let them enter, saying ironically: "You didn't mistake me for a runaway bride, did you, boys?"

The men laughed vaguely.

"No, but you can help us. We're after a big story."

"Help you? How?"

"There's a Frenchman here named Archambault. You crossed with him on the *Ile de France*—"

"Did I, now?"

"Sure you did. We know, Mr. Destiny."

"I crossed," said Bentley solemnly, "with the Teddy bears on Noah's Ark, and the truth is that Archambault is my fiancée in disguise. Anything else I can tell you?"

The press does not like to be ribbed, and showed it.

"Lay off, Mr. Destiny," urged Storms.

"We know what we know. You can give us the inside story of this airplane business if you will. We got a cable from our Paris correspondent with a hot tip. We know all about the deal. Come on, give us a break."

"Why not ask Archambault himself?" asked Bentley.

"Tried to. He threw us out. He's tough, that Frog. Come on, give us a break."

Bentley assumed a mysterious manner.

"All right, boys," he said. "The truth is that Archambault has come over to buy back the Statue of Liberty. They're

going to melt her down in Paris and make new buttons for the French cops."

Reporter O'Connell, as his name might suggest, had a temper.

"Yeah," he said. "You wanna play wise-guy? Okay, but get this. We know you're mixed up in this airplane deal.

Bentley lazed comfortably over coffee and fumbled through his paper. Toward eleven o'clock, his telephone rang jarringly.

You're trying to get something on Archambault yourself. Now, we can help you if you help us. We've got plenty of staff in Paris, and you can use our cable. But don't try to kid, Mr. Destiny. You can't get away with it."

"Would that be a subtle threat, newspaper man?" Bentley came back, frowning.

"Take it or leave it," said O'Connell. "We got plenty on you. You came in just before Archambault. You tipped a bell-hop ten bucks to give you some names, and his name was with 'em. Then you tipped the room-clerk to keep Archambault from knowing you stay here. That's plenty phony. Why not come clean, Mister? We don't wanna get tough, but we can force you if we try. Newspapers can dig up a lot of stuff when they want to."

This was making things easy. Bentley registered a well-planned indignation and careful anger. His face clouded. With a gesture of fury, he flung his door open.

"Get out of here!" he roared at the gentlemen of the press. "Get out of here, you cheap would-be blackmailers! You can't threaten me. I tell you once for all, I never even heard of Archambault before. Now get going before I toss you out of the window."

IT worked. It was a good, convincing act, and it worked. The press gentlemen recoiled, and walked backward to the door. This Mr. Destiny, they saw, was a man of action. He was not to be bamboozled and threatened and browbeaten. Furthermore, he had the bulk and the brawn to make good his promise. They were not, perhaps, afraid; but they were discreet. A fight, just now, when they were entirely in the wrong, would spoil all their chances of getting the prized story. And so they retreated, while Bentley slammed the door in their faces.

As soon as he was alone in his room, however, his frown was replaced by a grin. This interview had been satisfactory. Things were developing nicely.

"And that, little children of the Happiness Hour," he said aloud, "is a demonstration of Personal Mystery. Tune in on the same station tomorrow, and find out what will happen to little Johnny Destiny."

And shortly he went down to dinner.

AFTER a quick cocktail in the Washington taproom, Bentley descended into the famous grill; nor did he merely walk through the lobby; he sauntered—proudly he sauntered. Life, he felt, had grown suddenly to be a bright and happy thing. He was filled with a pleasing consciousness of his well-tailored clothes, and he was aware that this new John J. Destiny was like a newer, happier incarnation of the old Bentley Dewert.

Besides which, he was convinced he had done his work well. If ever Brood's Personal Mystery formula had been well applied, he had thus applied to it the gentlemen of the press and to the hotel management.

Indeed, so contented was Bentley as he went down the marble steps into the grill-room, so pleased with himself, that he did not hear the chuckle of the Fates. Yet surely those three sinister sisters who sit high above us on a cloud to bedevil mere humans with their caprices, were chuckling loudly; and with reason.

It was a new pleasure to toy with the menu. To select a good *Potage Saint-Germain* instead of Miss Rylan's pea-soup, and a thick, juicy *tournedos* instead of her inevitable hamburger, gave life a richer, finer meaning.

Having ordered, he mused pleasantly, lost in dreams; and it was then that tinkling laughter crept through into his reverie. Musical laughter—full-throated, young, bright laughter, full of rippling arpeggios. It caught his attention.

Intrigued, Bentley looked around him for the source of this laughter and presently he found it. He stared. She had curls of golden brown, cool gray eyes, sparkling, fragile yet determined features; and there was about her a halo of radiance which, to Bentley's fancy at least, made her evident and distinctive from all the other young women in the restaurant. And there were many others.

Her ivory shoulders and arms emerged like petals of some gentle flower from the corolla of her black-velvet bodice.

A firm, graceful back made a stark V which rippled as she laughed as though some silver mechanism were concealed under it. A dainty foot, a silver slipper protruded into a spot of light which crept under her table. She was, he told himself, utterly lovely, utterly delicious.

To affirm that Bentley was enlivened with a new interest would be to understate. He felt himself glowing. He felt himself thrilling. Many a long month it had been, now, since his finances and general situation had permitted him to cast so much as a glance at any maid. Puppy loves, Bentley had had. Prom-girls, party girls, neighborhood girls and all the kaleidoscopic array of femininity which is natural for a growing boy and normal young man, he had known during his youth and his college days. But there had never in Bentley's brief lifetime been anything such as this lady of brown curls pictured to him.

"Besides," he told himself, whimsically, "I ought to make her acquaintance, anyhow. Both right and duty. Brood's Personal Mystery business, if it's any good, ought to be just as good in love as in—well, in life."

THE girl had not seen Bentley. She was occupied with gay conversation, shared with an elderly gentleman who sat across from her at her table. Quite elderly, this gentleman: he was wizened and withered of face; his hair was snow-white, and cut across his lean forehead in old-fashioned bangs. His features were so pointed that he recalled, to Bentley, the portraits he had seen of an aging Voltaire. Quite diabolical-looking, he was, although charming too, in a devilish sort of way. His tiny eyes twinkled merrily, one behind a monocle. As Bentley watched him, he stabbed the air with a lean finger, as though punctuating a sentence, and the girl burst again into her free, happy laughter. It was nice to see them together, the old and the young, both full of happiness.

Now it was at this precise moment that the Fatal Sisters, weaving their pattern, wove an extraneous bit of organic material into their skein. This material was a fish-bone, no less.

For suddenly the bone lodged itself in the old gentleman's throat, tickled his esophagus and choked him until his withered body was racked with coughing. The old fellow turned red, then purple, then black in the face. Brown Curls got from her chair and fluttered

around their table in a panic. Remembering some old household saw, she beat him upon the back, which was bad, and gave him water to swallow, which was worse; and presently the poor old man gave a still more violent gasp, clutched his tortured throat, rolled his eyes and slid out of his chair to the floor.

Everything went haywire then. It was not a pretty scene. The girl screamed faintly. Other diners craned their necks and started from their tables. Waiters came running. There was babble and commotion.

BENTLEY leaped into action. He bounded across the aisle and gathered the frail withered body up in his arms.

"Get a doctor!" he snapped at the gaping waiters. "Send him up to my room—1444."

The girl was hysterical and was jabbering something wildly at Bentley, but he scarcely listened.

"Come with me," he commanded her sharply, and dashed toward the elevators with the old man dangling limply in his arms. She followed him. She was fighting her panic now, and once in the elevator-car, she set her quick fingers to undoing the old man's collar and shirt-bosom, but she did not speak. In those few minutes Bentley scarcely noticed her silence, but as he hurried down the hallway with his burden and she pattered behind him, it grew upon him that she had said not one word directly to him. Odd, he felt. Almost ungrateful. Not that he *wanted* gratitude, but—

Still silently the girl fetched a glass of water from Bentley's bathroom while he worked over the prostrate little old man, using every trick he could remember of artificial respiration from his Boy Scout days. Like death itself, the old man looked now. His old face was curiously fine, though, even despite the diabolical lines of cynicism and humor, and the cross-hatched wrinkles of age. Features of an aristocrat, surely.

Then little by little, the congestion began fading from his face as Bentley pressed and released his chest. No, he wasn't quite dying.

"I think," said Bentley to the girl, "he's coming around. If that doctor would only hurry—"

But the girl couldn't answer. Or wouldn't. She merely stood there, stiffly, tensely, fighting to keep back hysteria, twisting a handkerchief in her fingers, trying to be strong. Queer, in a way,

but there was—he could see it now—a look of gratitude in her eyes. Lovely eyes, they were. Not very nice to take advantage of a situation like this to make her acquaintance, but—

Then there was a knock at the door, and the doctor came in, a neat little man, with an antiseptic manner and a squeaky voice.

"What's this, what's this, now? Bone, eh? M-m-m, bad business for a man his age, m' dear," he squeaked professionally, addressing the girl rather than Bentley. He produced a stethoscope and hovered over the old man on the bed, while the other two watched in silence. He thumped and patted and manhandled the old fellow, and finally probed with forceps in his mouth. Presently he gave a little yelp of glee.

"Ah!" he cried, like a legerdmain artist snatching a rabbit from your hat. "There we are. *There* we are. There's the deadly weapon. There's your *ossum piscis*." He was holding up the fatal fragment of bone as if to be admired. "Didn't puncture the walls, fortunately. Be all right now, barring shock."

He stood erect, rubbing his hands complacently and smiling on them both. "Well, well, well," he chirruped, pocketing his stethoscope. "No place for an old man like me, ha, ha! Must be going. Leave you young folks alone. Ha, ha, ha!" And he pranced out.

WHEN the door was closed, Bentley looked at the girl.

"Cheery one, that medico, isn't he?" he asked, trying to make conversation.

She merely nodded.

"Can't I get you something?" he tried again. "Cigarette? Aspirin? Drink? Pretty tough for you, Miss—"

She shook her head, and this time she really tried to smile. Her lips moved, but she could hardly make them say:

"Thank you—thank you—so much. I've been so—so useless. I was afraid he'd never—oh, I was scared! You've been very kind—so very kind—"

And then she broke. The flood came bathing her face with the relief of tears. She turned from Bentley and fell face-forward on the bed by the old man, crying out to him with real anguish in her voice:

"Oh, Bunty—Bunty! Please, Bunty—you mustn't—"

Bentley took that instant to creep out of his room and leave them. Tears always embarrassed him. Leave them

alone. Very obviously, she loved this old fellow. Her father, perhaps? Or grandfather? He was old enough. Intimate business, this, not his at all. Better leave them alone awhile until the old man recovered. There would be time to pursue the acquaintance—later.

JUST as he closed the door, he could hear the high, weak voice of the old man saying:

"Ah—uh! Lorrie—Lorrie. . . . That you, Lorrie?"

Then he tiptoed down the hall.

Bentley hurried down into the grill-room and finished his dinner. This would give them a chance. They'd appreciate that, he knew. Somehow, though, his heart was no longer in his eating; and abandoning his dessert, he got up and went to the check-girl, asking for the belongings of the young woman and old gentleman.

"The man's ill," he said. "I've taken him to my rooms. I didn't get the ticket, but you'll know their things, won't you?"

When he offered the check-girl a dollar bill, she found them easily—a fine ermine wrap, and a man's long, heavy ulster. Bentley took them and hurried eagerly upstairs to his landing. At last, he told himself, he'd know this lovely creature. This was not taking advantage. This was the nice way. . . .

He knocked quietly on his own door, but there was no response. He knocked again, louder. Still no answer. He tried the knob and pushed in, wondering. His bedroom was entirely empty. So was his drawing-room. Girl and man had vanished. They were gone. They had left not even a note, not a trace. Nothing. He looked down at the ermine and the astrakhan in his hands, and they seemed to look back at him, grinning and ironical.

"Now what the devil," demanded Bentley of space, "would that mean?"

They might at least have waited—to thank him, if nothing more. It was sheer rudeness, running out on him like that. And he was disappointed, too. And puzzled. And baffled. Why, he wondered, would they leave their wraps behind? It wasn't quite real. It made no sense. There was the money-value of that ermine wrap, if nothing more. Such trinkets cost in the thousands, he knew. Even the wealthiest people don't go running off leaving them around. There was some mystery about this.

He hurried down the hall and rang the elevator bell. When the car came, he belabored the operator with questions. Had they taken his car? When did they go? Were they upset? Was anything wrong?

"Listen, Mister," said the boy, "I wouldn't know why, but they sure went outa here fast. You'd 'a' thunk they was elopin', maybe. Only the old geezer, he coulda been her grandpappy. Yeah, they went outa the side entrance. They took a cab. Hell, no, Mister, I wouldn't know what cab. I only seen 'em. Whatsamatter, they gyp youse? I t'ought they was swells."

He thought of applying to the house detective. But he put the thought aside. Perhaps there was something under all this that didn't meet the eye. Whatever it might be, it concerned him not at all. Besides, the girl was—well, she was like that. Beautiful—lovely. Perhaps she was in trouble. Perhaps—

And so he mused, alone in his room. He fingered over the long ulster and the lovely ermine, blindly hoping to find some clue. But there was nothing save the labels of well-known sales houses—a prominent Fifth Avenue furrier and an equally fine men's furnishing house. No personal name. No sign, no clue. He made a note of the ink-written number inside the inner pocket label of the fur wrap, promising himself to look into it the next day. He felt like a baffled detective. He also felt as though he had somehow been personally affronted.

And it was with this uneasy, uncomfortable feeling of chagrin that Bentley finally went to bed.

There is no balm for tired nerves like a bit of long green in the pocket; and even though Bentley had been really distressed before retiring, sleep came quickly that night.

IN the morning, however, the thoughts of business-in-hand superseded those of a more romantic business. He put Brown Curls out of his mind, and ordered his breakfast with real zest, requesting that a copy of the *Ledger* be sent to his rooms at the same time.

"Maybe I'm a flop as a reporter myself," he mused after making his call, "but I'll bet I started something with those two. Now what in thunder is this airplane deal they talked about?"

The solitary rite of breakfast in the Washington Towers is pleasantly in contrast with that of Miss Rylan's board-

inghouse. Bentley lazed comfortably over his coffee, toast and marmalade and fumbled through his paper. There was nothing on the first page to suggest that any story had come out of his yesterday's interview with reporters O'Connell and Storms. Nor the second, nor the third. He felt a shade of disappointment. He had grown, subconsciously, to believe in this Personal Mystery business, and he wanted it to work.

BUT then, suddenly, when he turned at random to Page Eight, where a jumble of stories with a Washington date line told of the daily routine of government business, his eye fell upon a three-column headline, followed by a story which greeted him with a shock.

**FRENCH AIR OFFICIAL SECRETLY
BUYING U.S. MILITARY AIR-
PLANES, SAYS RUMOR**

**Washington Disturbed by Report of Flouting
Congress' Armament Embargo**

With the arrival yesterday of Camille Archambault, French Undersecretary for Air, in the *Ile de France*, comes a troublesome rumor that the stated purpose of M. Archambault's visit, to inspect several commercial airports, is only a blind to cover negotiations for the purchase of 100 big bombers of the new S-4 Army type, considered to be the most formidable war-machines yet developed.

The report, emanating from sources generally considered reliable, involves an unnamed manufacturer who may have been negotiating with France for this large sale despite the recent armament embargo by Congress and the ruling that no materials usable in warfare can be sold to any foreign nation, friendly or otherwise. . . . Washington circles are speculating as to the legality of such a transaction and are shocked at the defiant attitude thought to have been taken by the nameless manufacturer. . . .

Spice is given to the rumor by the fact that M. Archambault not only refuses a press statement but was vehement, when interviewed last night, in that refusal, whereas a somewhat mysterious American appears to have crossed with him in the *Ile de France* and is staying at the French official's hotel in New York. . . . Likewise, no statement could be obtained last night from any of the three leading airplane manufacturers, although it is supposed that the unnamed American is either a technical adviser or a contact man from one of the companies.



Bentley's first smile at the story faded quickly into a frown. Personal Mystery, he decided, was working well enough, but he could see serious things ahead. Getting mixed up in a shipment of war planes to a foreign country, what with the troubles in Spain and China fanning public opinion and sentiment, was not at all to his liking. It suggested Senatorial investigations. It suggested unpleasant publicity. Kidding the newspapers is well enough; but kidding Uncle Sam is another business, and a dangerous one. It might, he knew, endanger not only his new job of "ghost-acting" for Brood, but his personal liberty as well. There was dynamite in that article. He was not entirely happy in his first successful skirmish with the forces of Personal Mystery.

Toward eleven o'clock, Bentley's telephone rang jarringly.

"Hello," said a voice, "Mr. Destiny?" Bentley acknowledged himself.

"This," said the unknown, "is Julius Hartlow speaking."

"Who?"

"Julius Hartlow, of Hartlow-Morgan Aircraft."

"Oh," said Bentley. "And what can I do for you, sir?"

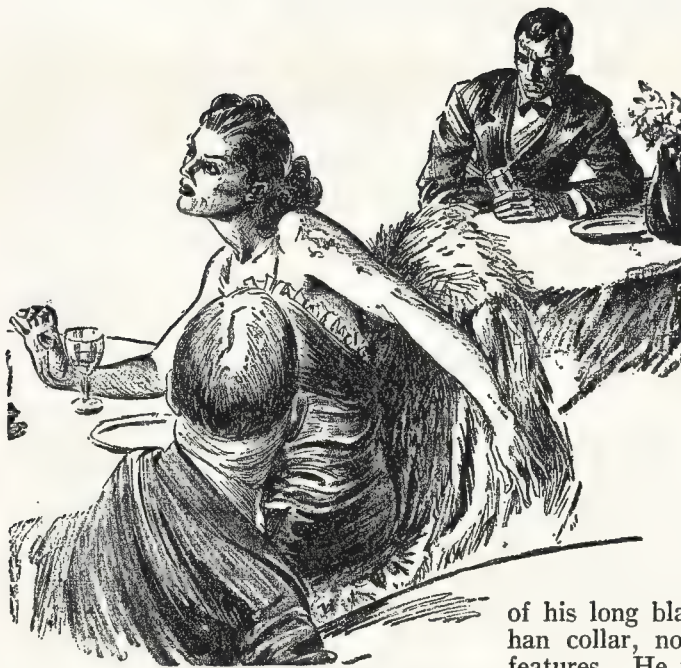
"If you could give me a few minutes of your time, Mr. Destiny, I should be glad to call at your hotel this morning."

"In just what connection?"

"In—ah—in certain matters of mutual interest."

This was new. This was good. This was, in short, the perfect development of Personal Mystery. Bentley played his game carefully.

"I don't quite see, Mr. Hartlow," he said, "that we have any common inter-



Suddenly a fish-bone lodged in the old gentleman's throat and choked him... The girl screamed faintly.

ests." He felt that this was a happy phrase. He was mildly proud of himself.

"Possibly not," said Hartlow. "Yet I believe it would be worth your while to see me, sir."

Bentley was not easily to be persuaded.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but I'm rather busy this morning. And I can hardly see just how we might profit by an interview. I am sure there is some kind of a misunderstanding. Quite sure, Mr. Hartlow. Good morning, sir."

And he hung up the receiver.

Then he paced his room irresolutely. Had he done the clever thing? Hartlow he knew by reputation. A big man—an important man. A man not accustomed to being cut short by people! There must be, furthermore, some connection between Hartlow and that come-on article which the *Ledger* had printed. Perhaps it had not been wise, after all, to answer so high-handedly. Hartlow represented millions. Bentley, as John J. Destiny, wanted millions. It was hard to know just what to do. This Personal Mystery formula of Brood's had a lot of angles. But it did work, no doubt about that. He had only kept his mouth shut, and already they had started building him into something he wasn't!

Then his door-buzzer rang and turned a new facet of adventure toward the light.

The gentleman who stood there had the air of being all that one implies by the word "distinguished." He was that, precisely. He did not require the proof

of his long black overcoat with astrakhan collar, nor the sober gray of his features. He was merely it, in person. His face was gray-white and serious, pointed and delicate and marked about the mouth with little caliper lines of repression and control. His neat mustaches were graying softly, and there were deep furrows across his high forehead. And all these things were a key to his presence. *Distinguished* was quite the word.

"Good morning, Mr. Destiny," said the grave voice.

"I am aware that this is an intrusion. I would not have been guilty of it had I not felt the importance of a rather strange situation."

Bentley said nothing at all; the man's very gravity and the atmosphere of commanding but quiet power in him, had taken away Bentley's usually glib speech.

"I," stated the visitor, "am Julius Hartlow."

HE said it in a manner which dramatized the moment. The very tone and timbre of his voice made it plain that, had not circumstances warranted, he would not be the man to come calling uninvited upon any young nobody like a John J. Destiny. He made Bentley uncomfortably conscious of his own youth and aware of his own false position. He felt a little helpless and insecure, but he motioned Hartlow to a chair and did his best to follow out his original attitude.

"I can't see, Mr. Hartlow, how there can be anything of value to discuss between us. I believe I said so just now over the phone. But since you have found it worth while to come nevertheless—"

Hartlow sat with gravity; still, he was also not quite at ease, as Bentley could see, yet he had an air of being determined to see through this thing, whatever it was.

"You may," he said, "be perfectly right, Mr. Destiny. I may be altogether mistaken in you, in which case I apologize and withdraw. Yet I want to ask you one question, if I may."

Bentley nodded. "Certainly," he said.

"The *Ledger*, this morning, carried a story which concerns M. Archambault, the French air official. It mentions also an unnamed American who crossed with him in the *Ile de France*. Will you tell me frankly if you are that American, Mr. Destiny?"

DIRECT. All too direct. Too fast. Bentley was not prepared for it. Hartlow was a keen man, high caliber. He must be careful, now. Most careful.

"I saw the story," he admitted slowly. "I'll be as frank as you wish, Mr. Hartlow. I'm the man referred to, but not the man you think. I mean that the article is absurd, unfounded and wrong—in what concerns me."

"Just why?"

"This is a bit of a third degree, isn't it, Mr. Hartlow?" said Bentley with a smile. "Are you trying to involve me in something? I do not intend to commit myself."

Bentley felt that this was a sound attitude, but Hartlow's quiet answer disconcerted him.

"That, Mr. Destiny, is a rather astute bit of hedging, but it's no go. I'm sorry to be persistent, but this situation is important to me. I don't understand your remark about that press article, but I do happen to know that you are in some way involved with Archambault. I would not have come here had I not had certain facts in my possession."

Bentley felt an urge to laugh. In his mind he could see the devious grapevine course of that single injection of Personal Mystery—from bell-boy, to clerk, to press, to Hartlow. This was a game. This was better than chess or bridge. What, he wondered, did Hartlow mean? But he only said, in a surprised tone:

"Facts, Mr. Hartlow?"

"Exactly. A reporter from the *Ledger* came to my Long Island home last night. He had got a tip from Paris about the possible French purchase of airplanes here, and he wanted a statement from me. I refused him. He tried to force

me into a statement by telling me that you—or somebody else stopping at this hotel—was hostile to my company's plans for contracting with the French Government. He said that you were contacting Archambault in some way. You had done some queer bribing in this hotel. Your manner and actions have aroused suspicion. He tried to force me into admitting that I had contracts with France by insinuating that you were trying to cut in on them. I confess, his story was not quite coherent, but it amounted to what was in the paper this morning."

"Which," said Bentley, "was the bunk."

"Was it?"

"Yes, entirely."

"But you did arrive in the *Ile de France* with Archambault. Or so the hotel informs me. And you are registered here under a false name, Mr. Destiny. Can you deny that?"

"I can," said Bentley, "deny anything. You seem to be asking all the questions and yet making all the statements, Mr. Hartlow. Suppose you tell me what this is all about."

Hartlow was plainly annoyed. A harder, firmer note crept into his voice.

"As to that," he said, "I can lay my cards on the table. If you are not involved in this, it can do no harm. If you are, I can take certain measures—"

AS though to watch the effect of these words, he paused, but Bentley gave no sign.

"Some months ago," Hartlow went on, "my company learned through our Paris agents that France would be in the market for the new American type of bombers. They intend to build an air fleet second to none. I learned also that this Archambault, who is a high-caliber technician, would handle the purchase. We made contact with him and made bids. That is business, Mr. Destiny. We need and want that business."

Bentley pounced on that.

"Regardless," he demanded, "of Washington and the armament embargo?"

"Yes, since you bring it up. We are not equipping France for war; rather to maintain peace. Replacing old ships with new ones. Besides, my company is quite able to handle the embargo problem, if it comes to that."

"Oh," said Bentley noncommittally; and Hartlow continued:

"The contracts have not yet been signed," he said, "but the deal is prac-

tically concluded, and we have actually put the craft in work, believing that we were the only manufacturers under consideration. But yesterday I had a cable from my Paris agents to the effect that the deal had leaked out, and that another firm was underbidding us. Now I believe you know that firm, Mr. Destiny."

"Do you?" asked Bentley.

Hartlow bit his lip.

"Equivocation is a dangerous business," he said. "I am advised that a contact man from this other firm actually did cross with Archambault. Not only that: I went to meet the French official at the pier in person, only to discover that he had been disembarked at Quarantine in some one's private launch. Furthermore, his secretary refused me an appointment with him when I telephoned his room—despite the fact that his premier purpose in coming over was to see me and close this airplane deal with Hartlow-Morgan. Plainly, there is interference somewhere."

"So," said Bentley, "it would seem."

"Yes," said Hartlow. "And it points to you, sir."

"Just how?"

"I have done some investigation, Mr. Destiny. I retain the services of a detective agency for such work. You made a purchase of clothing at one of the Peat-Brooke stores. You left an old suit there to be delivered at later request. The initials B.D. are pasted on the lining of that suit. And the suit is of French manufacture, Mr. Destiny."

"I agree that this proves little or nothing, yet the name 'Destiny' does not appear on the passenger list of the *Ile de France*. The American consulate in Paris doesn't know of you. You also pasted false traveling labels on the bags you have here in this hotel. Just why, I cannot determine; either you did cross on that ship under another name, or you did not. There would have been time for you to have made all these strange arrangements had you come ashore in that private launch. Your old suit is French. You pronounce the name *Archambault* with an excellent French accent. Now, what am I to think, Mr. Destiny? Your behavior is odd, to say the least."

"Think exactly what you please, Mr. Hartlow," Bentley said.

"Ah?" said Hartlow. Then the phone rang. Bentley picked it up and heard:

"Meestaire Destinee?"

"Yes," said Bentley.

"Eet ees here the secretaire of Monsieur Archambault, demanding that we see you for one leetle minute, no?"

Bentley grinned broadly. He spoke clearly, for Hartlow's benefit.

"Monsieur Archambault?" he echoed. "Very good. I shall be glad to make an appointment. But it must be later. If you will be good enough to call just one week from today. . . . Yes, exactly. Good-by, monsieur."

Hartlow, listening unavoidably, stared queerly but made no comment. Finally he said:

"It is plain that you have something to conceal, Mr. Destiny."

"Who hasn't?"

"Come, come, young man," said Hartlow, losing patience now. "I'm endeavoring to keep this interview friendly. I've made it plain what I want. There is a matter of six million dollars involved in these contracts. I would go to considerable lengths to avoid interference. Don't make me force your hand."

"Force? Would that be a threat, Mr. Hartlow?"

Bentley felt that this was just the right note.

"Rather a warning," said Hartlow. "You may not be aware of it, but there is a law in this State against false registration. A law seldom enforced, it is true, but which can be enforced. It is the alias law, used chiefly as a device for holding criminal suspects for further evidence."

"I am not quite a criminal suspect, Mr. Hartlow."

"How do I know that? I dislike such measures, Mr. Destiny, but if you are here working for my competitors, I must use means to force you out. I could quite easily have you held, young man. I have some influence in New York. I mean business, Mr. Destiny."

HE did, too. No doubt about that. Cold, precise and uncompromising, Hartlow was. Bentley felt a nervousness. He had not known of this law. Things were taking an awkward turn. If what Hartlow said were true, then anything would be possible—even jail. For a time, at least. It would spoil things, beside being uncomfortable. It would give away his whole structure. The newspapers would get it. He would be losing his story with the *Chronicle*, losing his job with Brood. Better be careful now. Be cautious. So he made a rapid decision to shift his tactics.



"Well, sir," he said, "suppose we look at it differently. Suppose I were the man in question? Suppose I were acting for your competitors? Then what?"

"Then," said Hartlow calmly, "it would be my part to make it worth your while to withdraw. To stay out of my way."

"In other words, to double-cross my employers, is that what you mean?"

"You put it rather baldly, but it amounts to that."

Bentley wanted to laugh out loud then. This was it. This was the trick. Hartlow had fallen for it. But he controlled himself, and only said:

"I am not for sale, Mr. Hartlow. You didn't count on that, did you?"

"I counted on nothing," said the airplane magnate. "I simply have no choice."

"And that means?"

Hartlow became suddenly more gentle.

"See here, young man," he said. "You're playing a queer game. First you surprise me by being much younger than I had anticipated. You make noncommittal replies to my frank questions. You hide behind equivocations. And

when I tell you bluntly the situation in which I am caught, and give you a chance to explain yourself, you shift your ground and hide behind hypotheses. Very clever, perhaps. You have succeeded in confusing me, I grant you. But now you force me into a new position. Either you are dangerous to me, or you are not, and I cannot take any chances. I must use whatever weapons I may have to protect myself from the possibility. I know that I can have you arrested on suspicion. I can bring charges against you under the alias law—and make them stick, too. Long enough, at least, to give me a chance to force my contracts through. I'll admit I may be wrong, and that your game, whatever it is, has nothing to do with me. In which case, your arrest might prove a misfortune. I fancy you wouldn't welcome it, anyhow."

BENTLEY could not keep back a quick grin.

"Nobody loves a jail, Mr. Hartlow," he said. "But aren't your methods a little strong?"

It was evident that Hartlow was sensitive there.

"Yes; and I dislike it," he said. "I'm a manufacturer, not a politician, or a gangster, and this is not in my line. But with six million dollars at stake, I'd have few scruples."

"So," said Bentley, "it appears."

They looked at each other in silence for minutes. Finally Bentley said:

"Suppose, Mr. Hartlow, we admit, for the sake of the argument, that an investigation of me and my arrest would be—as you say—specially unwelcome just now. Just what is the alternative?"

"Another supposition?" Apparently Hartlow was stalling for time, unwilling to commit himself.

"Suppositions are safe enough."

"Very well. Taking your hypothetical case, I should require you to sign a document of some kind—I could have my lawyers devise one—which would restrain you effectually from interfering with my plans. I would pay you for it."

"How much?"

"Say—a thousand dollars."

"Not enough," Bentley said determinedly. He was plunging now. Stake all or nothing.

"I've already said you are wrong about me. My *real* interests, Mr. Hartlow, are worth a lot more than a thousand dollars. I have no idea what kind

of a document you would want me to sign, but I assure you—I don't come as cheap as that." He hoped he had laid enough stress on the word "*real*."

"Are we still being hypothetical, Mr. Destiny?"

"Not when it comes to cash money."

"Then how much are your—ah—interests worth—still supposing they are inimical to mine?"

That was a hard thing to answer. It was all sheer bluff, all remote from anything tangible and real, all out in some fantastic dimension; yet he had to keep a logical face on it. He said thoughtfully:

"You claim your airplane contracts are worth six millions, Mr. Hartlow. Certainly you would be willing to sacrifice one tenth of one per cent to protect them. That is six thousand dollars. Not much, at that. I could modify that, after seeing your document. It is conceivable that your smart lawyers could trick me into signing my life away. But for the sake of our hypothesis, call it six thousand—plus."

Hartlow merely stared. Bentley was tense and inwardly troubled. Perhaps he had gone too far. Perhaps he had let ambitious eagerness betray him.

"Six thousand dollars," Hartlow said, very slowly and thoughtfully, "is a lot of money—to pay for being wrong. If I am right, however, it would be worth that, and more."

Bentley kept his pose admirably. He shrugged and said:

"It was all your own idea, Mr. Hartlow. And that's the chance you have to take." He was quite pleased with that last bit.

More silence. More study. Then decision crept slowly into Hartlow's face.

"I'll do it," he said.

"Yes? I thought we were being hypothetical, Mr. Hartlow. Just what, precisely, will you do?"

"I'll pay you six thousand to sign a binding document. I see it now. I can draw one that will hold you."

"I said 'Six thousand—plus,' Mr. Hartlow."

"Plus what?"

"I'll defer that until I see what you want me to sign."

Hartlow gave him a sharp look.

"Are you, by any chance, a Yankee?"

"Bostonian, sir," said Bentley smartly, and grinned at the effect on the other man, but his grin faded quickly as Hartlow said, in a mysterious tone:



"Come on, youse," he growled. "Come on, before I hafta get tough."

"Then, my smart young friend, you will appreciate the document I have in mind. It will be quite binding. Quite, in fact. Shall we drive to my lawyer's now?"

What the devil, Bentley wondered, did the man have up his sleeve? A cool number, Hartlow, even though he was selling himself a wrong idea. Well, it would be worth trying, anyhow. A man who has nothing to lose takes very little risk. So he said:

"Very good, sir. I'll join you in a moment." Whereupon he donned his tan camel's-hair coat, tilted his hat at a jaunty angle, saluted his favorite mirror, as though he had not a care in all the world, and bowed briskly to the airplane magnate to lead the way.

IT would be a pat way of putting the thing to say that during those next thirty minutes or so, driving downtown in Hartlow's big limousine, Bentley had achieved a sort of triumph over himself. He had committed a kind of spiritual *hara-kiri*. Effectually dead was the jobless, friendless, almost hopeless and insufficient young ex-reporter named Dewert. But his ghost, now called John J. Destiny by a humorous quirk of his own imagination, carried on—a jolly ghost,

a devil-may-care ghost, a faintly arrogant young ghost with a ghostly ego swollen by his successes. A ghost, he told himself, may laugh at landlords, summonses, lawyers and bullets. Their very insubstantiality is their armor plate.

And so it was with something of a swagger, something of a what-the-hell-and-be-damned-to-you manner that he followed Julius Hartlow into the hushed sanctum of B. Leffingwell Bann's inner offices, and awaited the next scene in this melodrama of Personal Mystery.

The very name of B. Leffingwell Bann would, no doubt, have been awesome to most young men, but not to John J. Destiny. The noted corporation counsel was a personage so illustrious as to have created almost a legend. Judges, referees and jury panels trembled at a lift of his eyebrow. Senatorial investigating committees had hedged and quaked at a flip of his hand. The mere impact of Lawyer Bann's personality was said to chill the toughest enemy of the corporations who were willing (and able) to pay his fees to defend them against injunction, judgment and litigation.

But when Bentley, sauntering lightly into those doomful chambers, confronted the Great Man, he hid behind his ghostliness as a bandit hides behind his mask, and was impressed not at all. In fact, to the contrary.

Was he to sign some document? Well, why not? Let them bring on their documents. For six thousand dollars, a ghost can sign anything.

But he did not know the trenchant brain of Lawyer Bann.

THE interview was not a long one. Hartlow told his story simply, quickly and directly.

"And so I feel, sir," he recapitulated, "that although I have no concrete proof that this young man is the—chiseler, is the word, I believe—I owe it to my company to leave no stone unturned to protect those contracts. I offer him an alternative—either go to jail as a suspicious character under the alias law, or else commit himself to interfere in no way in the affairs of my company. A document, a binding contract—which you will prepare, Mr. Bann."

B. Leffingwell Bann, at this pause, turned his deep-set eyes upon Bentley. The hypnotic forces in them which had baffled a thousand juries seemed to leap from his Lloyd-George eyebrows. He lifted his massive chin. He said:

"Hurrrumph!" They might take it or leave it, at a retainer of twenty-five thousand a year.

Sensing, perhaps, that his cryptic remark did not settle the matter adequately, Lawyer Bann completed his dictum with—"I see. . . . I see. . . . I see. . . . I see." Whereupon he nestled his chin deeply in his bosom, and seemed, for long minutes, to fall asleep.

Bentley lighted a cigarette and smoked complacently. Hartlow waited, tapping his foot impatiently.

After eons of time, Lawyer Bann emerged from his coma, cocked one eye under his bushy brows and said:

"Interesting—quite interesting."

Then he returned to his slumbers.

MORE minutes passed. The germ of mirth was working like a ferment in Bentley. He wanted to laugh. He wanted to shout. Was not this his moment of victory? Had he not proven Brood's formula? Had it not worked its miracles? Had not Julius Hartlow, an industrialist renowned for astuteness, snatched at the bait and swallowed it whole? What then did he care for the mutterings of some pompous shyster? Besides, what kind of a document *could* they make him sign?

Again the eye of Bann opened, and glared at Bentley.

"Can you," he demanded, "write?"

"Quite well, thank you," admitted Bentley.

"Can you write Hartlow's name?"

"Yes."

"Hurrrumph! How much is Hartlow paying you?"

"Six thousand dollars," said Bentley. "Plus."

"Plus what?"

Bentley thought fast. That was even easier than he had expected. Why not get more money? So he said:

"Plus—a commission."

Hartlow stiffened in his chair. "Commission? What commission? Now, see here, young man—" he snapped angrily, his patient gravity vanishing.

Bentley replied loftily:

"I've told you this is all wrong. You've insisted I'm somebody I'm not. You're interfering with my private life and my personal affairs, Mr. Hartlow. If you insist upon imposing on me, you'll pay for it. I want a commission of one per cent on your net profits after the airplanes have been sold. I want it over and above the six thousand."

A MILLION FOR JOHN J. DESTINY

"Why, you young—" Hartlow was white with anger.

"Hurrumph!" interrupted Lawyer Bann, waving his hand to check Hartlow's outraged explosion. "Wait a minute. Have you a check-book?"

Hartlow nodded, but puzzledly.

"Write two checks for six thousand dollars—two."

"Two? Why, I don't—"

"Two checks. Write 'em."

Hartlow drew his checkbook and wrote pains-takingly, shaking his head and muttering darkly.

"Now," said Bann, "you sign one of 'em. Let our young friend sign the other."

"Me?" demanded Bentley, astonished. "I can't sign a check. I haven't any bank-account."

"Sign Hartlow's name," said Bann.

"Hartlow's name! . . . Why, I can't! That's forgery."

"Naturally," said Bann. "That's just the point. Did you think this was a tea-party?" He was roaring now. His eyes were ablaze. He pointed an accusing finger at Bentley:

"You know damn' well nobody could write a contract that would be negatively binding. Think I'll let you rob my client? You'll sign Hartlow's name on that check, and we'll hold it. If those French contracts go through, we tear it up. If not, we deposit the check in a bank—a patent forgery. That makes you liable to arrest and imprisonment. Forgery's a crime, young man. You're smart. You see it?"

BENTLEY was suddenly angry as his little house of cards came tumbling down. They had tricked him. It was blackmail. Prearranged blackmail!

"I'll be damned if I'll forge Mr. Hartlow's name," he said bluntly. "Besides, how do I know you won't deposit the check anyhow? Hold it over my head for—anything?"

"That's a chance you take. We're taking plenty."

"I won't do it."

"No?" The lawyer's inflection was upward. His puffy fingers found a button on his desk, pressed it; and almost at once the outer door opened, and a uniformed special policeman thrust in his pugnacious head.

"Yessir, what's wrong?" he demanded.

Bann stabbed his finger at Bentley.

"Arrest that man," he said. "I want him held for two weeks. Tell Gargan over at Headquarters. Charge him with anything you like—conspiracy, espionage, sabotage, arson, mayhem or murder. I want him held and investigated. He's a crook and a rat. You'll find him falsely registered at the Washington Towers. Go work on that. And I just hope he resists arrest."

FOR an instant the policeman stared; then he sprang into action.

"Come on, youse," he growled, seizing Bentley's shoulder with practiced violence. "Come on before I hafta get tough."

And Bentley found himself being dragged toward the door, almost speechless, helpless, dazed entirely. The bubble of his self-assurance broke in a spray of emptiness. He deflated. With a voice that sounded faint and weak, as the burly officer hauled him away, he heard himself say:

"Wait—I'll sign your damn' check."

Bann's fat fingers made a sign. He favored the minion of law with a furry wink of an eye which expressed more than ten pages of legal documentation. The officer relaxed his hold and stood back, grinning. Perhaps he had seen such a performance before; who knows?

"I thought," said Bann, "you'd see the idea. Here's a pen, young fellow."

Bentley took the pen and the check. Carefully, trying his best to control the shaky nervousness in his hand, he wrote: "*Julius Hartlow*." He even felt that his signature was a reasonably good imitation of Hartlow's, written on the other check. But he had one more point to win.

"There," he said, "is your check, but I'll take Mr. Hartlow's before you get this one—or else I'll tear it up."

Bann looked slyly at Hartlow. Hartlow looked resignedly at Bann. Both nodded, each with a different meaning. Bann held out the other check.

"You'll find it's valid, young fellow," he said. "We aren't crooks. Now I'll take that. . . . Thanks." And taking the forged document from Bentley's numb fingers, he waved it gracefully in the air, blew gently upon the wet ink, and sat back in his chair like an owlish Buddha.

That was all. The thing was done.

Personal Mystery had won a victory—but it was a Pyrrhic victory.

In the next installment our young hero John Destiny has an even more exciting time in his endeavor to make a million dollars out of Ephraim Brood's "Personal Mystery" formula.



*"THE SCYTHIAN LAMB"
is the second story in
this unique series
wherein the strange
ancient myths that
have come down the
ages are made real
and reasonable.*

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

TRUMPETS

GENTLEMEN, I'm prepared to display before you the actual scenes, the happenings, the very voices, of a thousand years ago."

A dozen of us, all members of the Inventors' Club, were gathered in Norman Fletcher's laboratory when our host uttered those amazing words. Tall, dignified, white-haired, he eyed us quizzically for a moment, and smiled.

"I undertook to let each of you gentlemen challenge me in turn, to demonstrate my apparatus," he went on. "I shall keep that agreement. This evening I pick up the gauntlet flung down last week by Mr. Cromer. Ah, the cigars! Let us be comfortable, gentlemen."

I must confess that most of us agreed with Cromer, the electrical genius of our circle, that Norman Fletcher's inventions and discoveries dealt rather with illusion or trickery than with science. Yet—the damnable uncertainty!

Fletcher was no fool. An old Yankee of great wealth, he was said to have at his fingertips all the resources of science;

it was no secret that he had carried the later discoveries of Marconi to amazing lengths. In his relations with us, he was applying his findings to some of his own decidedly odd theories.

One such theory was that all the fabulous legends and great myths of mankind were based on fact. The human race, he liked to say, was credulous but by no means were men to be reckoned as dunces. And he undertook to prove it, in a manner absolutely bewildering. All of us were inventors; most of us were familiar with electricity; and we were certainly skeptics; but we could not explain the results Norman Fletcher obtained.

"Mr. Cromer, your challenge proved very interesting," said our host, lighting his cigar and surveying us placidly. If he were conscious of our skepticism,—I might almost say our underlying hostility,—he gave no sign of it, but went on in his calm manner:

"During the credulous Middle Ages there was a universal belief from China to Europe in a certain fabulous wonder,



Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon

from Oblivion

which had various forms. Some said lambs came out of the sea, rubbed themselves on rocks, and left behind a fine wool. The more accepted version was that lambs grew out of the earth, to which each was attached by an umbilical cord; these lambs produced a golden gossamer wool like silk. Travelers swore they had seen such lambs, had even eaten them roasted. Am I correct, Mr. Cromer?"

"You are," Cromer rejoined. "And you certainly can't find any factual basis for that lunatic story, in your television!"

"**B**UT it's not television," Norman Fletcher insisted gently. "We know that no sound, no light, is ever lost; it travels on and on into the infinity of space and time. My ultrasonic wave studies have enabled me to overtake and bring back scenes that the world has forgotten, voices and happenings lost in the far distant past. These trumpets from oblivion, as I term them, are far from perfect; but I think my presentation of them is rather good."

He leaned forward, to the switchboard before him, and pulled a switch. The room lights sank low.

"Rather good" was no name for it; we who had witnessed his unbelievable demonstration, were eager to see it afresh and strive to pierce its mystery. He had refused any explanation of his process, though entirely willing to show it in use. No wonder that some of us assigned it all to trickery or illusion!

We were seated facing a perfectly blank stone wall; the entire house was built of granite. There was no visible apparatus, there was no chance for any light projection.

"The tubes require some little time to heat," Norman Fletcher observed casually. "I suppose you're aware, gentlemen, that a thousand years ago Sicily was in the hands of the Arabs, and one of the great world centers of education and commerce. Even long before that time, a mysterious textile had come upon the markets of the world in small quantities; a material that was neither linen, silk nor wool, but somewhat like all three.

From it were woven garments of golden hue and of almost incredible fineness, which were eagerly bought by kings and emperors at tremendous prices. Charlemagne had one; and the Arab caliphs of Cordova paid a thousand gold-pieces each, for such robes."

"What's this got to do with my mythical-lamb yarn?" demanded Cromer.

"Everything. The origin of this byssus fabric, as it was named, remained unknown until recently. You may see ancient fragments of it in the South Kensington and other museums today; it is usually marked as a mysterious textile of uncertain origin. Ah! Now you'll see for yourself where the connection lies."

Upon the blank, rough stone wall before us was spreading a spot of colored light.

Now, there was no projected light; of this we were certain—yet so staggering were Fletcher's claims that most of us were convinced of trickery of some kind. As we watched the soft, iridescent play of colors on the stone wall, Wallach nudged me and spoke under his breath. Wallach had been a technical man in Hollywood, and had invented the new color camera taken over by the Army Air Corps.

"Listen! If this is some sort of picture, I'm going to put the bee on the old boy. You back me up. I want to suggest the subject for the next séance. I'll guarantee that he could make no movie of it in a week's time—or in six months either!"

I nodded assent, then leaned forward eagerly. Wallach caught his breath. That solid stone wall before us was dissolving!

It did just that—it dissolved, under our very eyes. The stones vanished. As through a window, a glassless window, we were looking out upon olive groves, white buildings, a blue sickle-sweep of bay, cloud-flecked skies. It was no flat picture, but rounded life and distance in full three dimensions. More, I recognized the spot: it was Palermo; the Palermo of a thousand years ago under the tolerant rule of the early Arabs, in the days when the Saracens held all Sicily.

BENEATH those olive trees walked a rugged man, a seaman, by his rolling gait; with him was a woman. She was robed in white and wore a Moslem veil that hid all her face except the eyes. None the less she conveyed a peculiar sense of grace and sweetness. Her hands,

clasped at her breast, were very white and firm with youth.

"Lady Daphne, you ordered me to come at the last moment for your private instructions," said the man. "I'm here. The ship's ready to sail the minute I go aboard."

She halted, facing him, and put out a hand to his arm as though in appeal.

"Captain Petros, I've a hard thing to say, but you're the one man in the world whom I can trust absolutely," she said, and paused.

HER voice whetted the curiosity to look upon her face, so musical was it. In that voice were the whispering rush of ocean waves, the low fluted cadences of wood doves.

"Funny thing if you couldn't," he rejoined. "I've served the Lochias interests these forty years. The men of my family have captained the ships of your family for generations back!"

"But now the Lochias interests face evil days," she said bitterly. "My husband is dead. I alone remain, and my two children. Look! There are the twins, the last of the house of Lochias."

She pointed to a fountain below them, where two small children and a nurse played in the sunlight. Two boys, yellow-haired, alike as peas.

"The last of that family which for hundreds of years has held a monopoly upon the commerce of kings," she said softly. "Today, peril threatens them and me, destruction threatens our industry and wealth. The Emir Al Mansur is determined to wrest the secret from us, Petros; I've had sure warning from one of his Greek slaves."

Astonishment filled the rugged bearded features. "But you have protection from the Caliph himself!"

"The Caliph's far away; Al Mansur, the Victorious, is Emir and ruler here. I want you to take the nurse and the two boys straight aboard the ship; land them in Tarentum, across in Christian Italy. Now!"

"You go with us, then?" The seaman's eyes searched her keenly.

"No; perhaps by the next ship. The *Pollux* is due from Ostia in two days. Now, I've converted most of our cash, jewels and property into bills of exchange; they're carried by the nurse, a faithful woman who was my own nurse. If I can evade the Emir Al Mansur, I'll transfer the entire business to Italy, to Tarentum."



Motionless, she watched the craft of Captain Petros head out to sea. The children were safe!

Captain Petros clucked his tongue. Transfer this business, which for many generations had centered here in Palermo! Knowing as he did the many agents involved, the almost incredible care with which its vital secrets were guarded, he was highly dubious.

"Can that be done, Lady Daphne? You hold a monopoly on the precious garments of byssus fabric, true, but the very secrecy surrounding it has caused

the business to become so intricate and involved—"

"It can be done," she interrupted with decision. "I'm the one person here who knows where the material comes from; we ship it in, prepared and ready for weaving, from Byzantium and Aleppo. The shops here can be abandoned and set up again at Tarentum."

"Then why not go with me now, today, with your two children?"

She made an impatient gesture. "I cannot! I hold this great business in trust for those two babes. I can't do everything on short notice. There are accounts to settle, letters and books to destroy, agents to be notified—in another two days I can finish and get off by the *Pollux*, with the help of Odoric."

His face changed. "Oh!" he grunted. "Yes, your manager's an able fellow—"

"Well, get off, get off!" she broke in. "Take them and go, and hold the ship at Tarentum. The nurse is ready. Get off! And God keep you."

Knowing her proud, imperious spirit, realizing that she could not endure the agony of farewells, the seaman saluted her and went. The nurse picked up one child, he the other. They went down to the gates of the estate and out of sight.

MOTIONLESS, she stood, while time dragged, while the morning sun waxed toward the zenith, while the brown-sailed fishing-boats toiled across the bay. Then she sighted a lordly dromon heading seaward, with the golden yellow canvas that denoted a Lochias ship. She caught her breath, clasped her hands again at her breast, and watched the craft of Captain Petros head out to sea and away. The children were safe!

She turned back through the olive trees to a range of low buildings below the villa that was her home. In these buildings were the shops and offices of the company. She entered them, looked at the weavers busy with their looms and shuttles, and passed on to the main office. Here three secretaries were at work under a tall, lean-faced young man with crisp yellow hair, who rose as she appeared. With a gesture, he dismissed the scribes. The two remained alone.

"The children are gone, Odoric," she said dully, and sank down on a seat before the table. It was littered with parchments. "Gone. The ship's gone. They're safe. Now we must prepare letters to all our agents, telling them to make no more shipments until they hear from us."

"I did that last night," said Odoric quietly. "I could not find you this morning, so I applied your seal and got the letters off by the dromon."

"Oh!" Her head lifted. Her dark eyes, above the edge of the veil, struck at him. "How did you know the addresses of the various agents? No one knows who they are!"

"I've known that for a long time." A slight smile touched the firmly chiseled

lips of the Goth. "Since your husband died, over a year ago, you've run this business with splendid efficiency. Today, Lady Daphne, you face disaster; here is needed a man's arm, a man's advice, a man's help. Now—off with the mask! Shall I speak plainly?"

She made a gesture of assent.

"Why have I, a man bred to arms and command, been working in this place like some Egyptian clerk, these two years and more?" he broke out. His voice was firm; only the tense features betrayed his inner emotion. "Because, Lady Daphne, from the first moment I saw you, there was no other woman on this earth for me. Aye, though you were another man's wife, though I could never let you guess my feeling—I loved you. I went to work here, that I might be near you, the fairest of Greek women."

He paused, as though expecting some angry reply; but she stirred or spoke not.

"Then," he went on, "in that sudden squall when your boat was upset and your husband drowned, you were washed up on the rocks and lay between death and life for days. I managed the business till you recovered, and ever since have helped to manage it. Since that day, you've worn that accursed veil like a Moorish woman, in mourning for your husband; hiding your lovely face from the world. Oh, I know you loved him! I know you'd never look twice at me, a Goth, a barbarian from the north," he added with bitter passion. "I've asked nothing from you. I ask nothing now, except to serve you."

STILL she remained silent. He resumed, less vehemently:

"I've seen disaster coming. Here in Sicily Moslem and Christian live amicably, as Muhammad ordered; but the Emir Al Mansur cares little for the teachings of his own prophet. He's a tyrant. More than your wealth and property, he wants you. He has long desired you—"

"No, no!" An abrupt cry escaped her. "You're mad, Odoric!"

"You're blind to it, as you're blind to my devotion. But I've seen it. Even when your husband was alive, Al Mansur desired you; since then, his desire has grown. I've seen it in his eyes when he looked at you. Now he is ready to take you and all the Lochias wealth at one swoop."

"You wrong him!"

"Wrong that accursed Saracen? I'd like to wrong him, sword in hand!"

flamed the Goth. "Well, I tell you that today you need me! I know your secrets, all of them; I've learned them, in order to help protect them for you. I know whence comes this mysterious tissue woven into the robes of kings. I know every angle of the business; how the secret has been guarded, too. The false stories about sheep that come out of the sea and yield their wool—bah! Childish tales, but people credit them. Yesterday I begged you to get away, aboard the ship of Captain Petros; you refused. Now it's too late. I tell you the Emir wants you, you yourself!"

"Wait." Her word, her upraised hand, checked him. "First speak of ourselves. It hasn't occurred to you, apparently, that you'd not have been here all this time unless you were wanted, appreciated, trusted. You give me singularly little credit for intelligence, Odoric. What's the advice you urge upon me?"

"To get rid of that veil. Forget your mourning. Be yourself once more. I know a sure, trusty man with a stout fishing-boat, who can take us to Italy. Flee tonight, before all is lost; abandon everything here and go! If you'd only listen and trust me!"

"And, perhaps, love you?" she added softly. All the rich music of her voice was stirred and shaken by swift emotion. "Ah, Odoric, what woman could know you day by day, and not trust you, not love you?"

He started, violently. "What?" he burst out hoarsely. "Do you know what you're saying?"

"Only too well, dear faithful friend. But on that day when my husband was drowned, when I was swept by the waves on the rocky coast and rescued, I finished with love forever, and all life was put behind me. You shall never see my face, Odoric, neither you nor any other man. Even though I love you, even though I've learned to value you above all others—"

She halted abruptly, as startled cries resounded. The door was flung open. A slave burst in to fall at her feet.

"Lady! They're here—soldiers of the Emir!"

NO chance to escape. Next instant half a dozen men were crowding in, dark armed men. Their officer, in glittering mail, made curt demand.

"Where is the man Odoric, the Goth?"

"I am he," said Odoric calmly. The officer gestured; his men fell upon Odo-

ric, bound him, dragged him away. The officer turned to Lady Daphne.

"I've a litter outside; I'm ordered to bring you to the presence of the Emir."

"How dare you invade my property?" she flashed angrily. "I have protection under the seal of the Caliph himself!"

"Lady, Al Mansur rules here. We do no hurt, either to you or this place. Do you go with me, or do I take you?"

"When I've dressed, I'll go."

Her quick eye had already perceived that this was no raid for plunder. Guards were posted, the weavers were kept at work, two Arab scribes were taking possession of all documents in the office. Not loot, but orderly seizure.

A CALM, veiled figure, inscrutable, she went her way. When she came forth, she was still veiled, but she wore one of those priceless robes that the house of Lochias, alone in all the world, manufactured. It was of a light, pure golden hue, incredibly strong yet so filmy as to seem of cobweb.

From beneath the hood curled a tendril of her dark hair; above the veil gleamed her dark eyes. And through that gossamer fabric, whose glorious golden sheen had the faint iridescence of a dove's plumage, could vaguely be glimpsed the rosy glow of her long-limbed slender body. She, who was famed as the loveliest of all fair women, disdained regally to conceal what God had made to delight mankind. Only Moslem women did this; the Greeks knew better.

When they brought her, the Victorious was seated in the Court of the Gazelles, conversing with his secretaries and cadis and officials. To Daphne, who knew the palace intimately and had frequently been a guest here in happier days, this was the sweetest of all sweet places in Palermo—palace rooms on two sides, the other two open to a glorious view of the bay and town.

The tiles of the floor and walls and of the plashing fountain in the center were of Persian make—gorgeous in coloring, representing gazelles at play. The roof-columns were of sculptured old marble from some Greek temple. Soft glowing Eastern rugs were strewn about, and pillow-seats of carved Moroccan leather.

Al Mansur, seeing the approach of his enforced guest, rose very courteously to receive her. He was a lean, hawk-faced man, sparsely bearded, darkly handsome, with thinly cruel lips and imperious, pas-



"Lord, give order to
loosen the cords, and
I'll tell everything!"
groaned Odoric.

sionate eyes; a warrior, every inch of him, and a prince. He wore a turban with jeweled aigrette, a simple robe of pure white, and was girded with the weapon which it was said never left him by day or night, the most glorious, the most famous, weapon in all the world, sung by poets and coveted by kings—the Bride of Islam, it was named. To all appearance a plain, unadorned sword in a plain silver scabbard.

With a word, Al Mansur dismissed most of those around him, only a secretary and the guards remaining, and went to meet his guest. A flush darkened his face, his alert gaze swept her figure, then he bowed and touched his fingers to brow, lips and breast.

"Greeting and welcome, most beautiful of all women!" he exclaimed, taking her hand and leading her toward the

leather seat. "As Allah lives, your presence brings a new light into this place, a new glory to the sunlight itself—"

"A truce to compliments, Al Mansur," she broke in, halting abruptly. "You've seized my property and brought me here by force, despite the protection from your master the Caliph which I hold. How dare you do such a thing? Answer that question, first of all!"

"Very well, since you demand it." He bent a swift, ardent gaze upon her; they were standing by the fountain, all others were beyond earshot. His voice leaped at her. "Dare? By Allah, I dare anything in such a cause! Lady, I knew you well in other days, and your husband also; since his death, I've scarcely seen you. You've mourned him, wearing



this veil which conceals your face; the greatest glory of Palermo is behind that veil. I'm a man; Allah gave me ambition, desire! Is it a crime to love you?"

"Love?" she said, and the word held lingering acid mockery. "You misuse the word, Al Mansur. Your harem holds a hundred women! How dare you—"

"Only you are the one I desire," he said bluntly. "How dare I do this? Because I love you. Because I've waited and waited—"

"Al Mansur, the Victorious—what a mockery!" she jeered. "Did you bring me here to whine, like a pining boy?"

Deeper burned his color beneath her whiplash of contempt.

"No, I did not! You ordered, and I lost my head." He bit his lip; with an effort, he got control of himself and motioned to the leather cushions. "Come, be seated; let me set forth the whole matter to you."

She assented, silently seating herself. Al Mansur remained standing. From the palace room behind them, a sound pierced the closed doors; a thin, febrile sound like the sobbing voice of a man in agony. Al Mansur darted one glance at those doors, then turned to her.

"Lady, I am confiscating all the Lochias properties; the business passes into my hands. Your two children shall become my adopted sons. You yourself shall be the absolute mistress of my harem. At your feet shall be heaped the treasures of Europe, of Africa, of Byzantium! Sicily is yours; say the word, and I'll lead my men into Rome and make you its mistress!"

"You'd have led them there already, if you could," she said, faintly ironic. "No, Al Mansur; you have struck too late. The Lochias properties have nearly

all been sold. My children have been sent away. Money and babes are beyond your reach."

For one instant, a flame of astonished fury lit up his face, then was gone.

"Indeed? But you remain; you're the chief thing. And the business itself."

"Whose secrets you'll never learn," came her voice, proud and disdainful. "I alone know them; nothing can make me reveal them, nor can any power compel me to your arms."

A smile stole into his eyes, a smile so crafty and assured that she, seeing it, felt her heart sink.

"Dear lady, do you think I'd have you by force?" said he. "Allah forbid! This night you sup with me, and when we have eaten and drunk together, the mullah of the chief mosque will make us man and wife, and your face shall no longer be veiled from me. And this shall be of your own free will. If you desire, you shall bring back your children; they'll not be harmed. You're in this palace, and you go not forth but remain here—and of your own will."

"Surely Allah has touched your brain!" came her voice, uneasy. He laughed lightly.

"I've watched you, lady; I know all that's gone on in your house, in your business, these many months. Compel you, when your heart is given to another? No! Well do I know your devotion to the house of Lochias and its interests. The new east wing of the palace has been prepared for you; presently you shall go there, where slaves await your commands, and at moonrise you shall receive me there—very gladly."

HE had a strong, cruel will, this man of steel; it shone forth from him as he spoke, and behind her veil Daphne whitened with boding terror. She forced a laugh.

"You seem sure of yourself, Al Mansur!"

"Come with me, and you shall know why," said he, and motioned to the guards. "Open the doors!"

She refused his hand, but accompanied him to the doors; these were opened, and they stepped into the room beyond. At first, with the change from bright sunlight, she saw nothing. Then she saw everything, and a low, stifled gasp escaped her. A slave placed a seat, and she sank upon it weakly.

Two scribes sat at a table, ready to write, but they had written nothing.

There was an odor of scorched flesh in the air. Upon the bright tiles lay a whip, dripping blood. And stretched upon what seemed to be a table, was a white thing; but the table was a rack, with torturers at head and feet, and the white thing was Odoric the Goth.

BELOVED of Allah," said one of the tormentors, "he has fainted. Shall I revive him?"

The Emir nodded, and they set about doing it.

He lay there naked, fastened by wrists and ankles, his head lolling, his face all drawn and asweat with agony, his body scarred and welted.

"A stubborn fellow," coolly observed Al Mansur. "Evidently they've not begun to tear him apart yet. Of course, Lady Daphne, at a word from you—"

He paused; a shiver took her, but she replied with indifferent voice.

"He is nothing to me. Why should I speak?"

"But I think he knows your secrets, lady," came the smooth reply.

Odoric was revived. His head came up, a low groan burst from him; he saw her sitting there, and his tortured eyes dilated.

"Do not speak, do not speak!" she cried out, with a sudden heart-break of agony. "Silence, Odoric, silence! Let them do their worst—"

"Easy for you to say," he gasped. A wailing scream escaped him, as the cords were tightened. "Stop! Stop! I'll tell!"

"Ease the cords." Al Mansur stood looking down at him. "So you do know the secret of the fabric, eh? No lies, you dog, or I'll have your eyes burned out! All these stories about sheep from the sea, about wool from the sea—these have concealed the truth long enough. Now speak! Whence comes this material?"

"Silence, Odoric! For the love of God, keep silence!" burst out the woman. But the man, looking up into the cruel features of Al Mansur, made response.

"From Scythia, Lord; from the shores beyond the Bosphorus, beyond Byzantium."

"Whence it is shipped here, eh? Very good." The Arab's eyes glittered, and he made a gesture to the scribes, who were already at work. "What animal produces this material?"

"It comes from a certain breed of lambs in that country," groaned Odoric.

TRUMPETS FROM OBLIVION

"Lord, give order to loosen the cords, and I'll tell everything. I can stand the torture no longer!"

Al Mansur nodded to the torturers. But Lady Daphne had lifted her head; her eyes, above the veil, were fastened upon the Goth in a certain stupefied amazement; when Al Mansur darted one triumphant glance at her, she dropped her head and slumped helplessly.

Odoric, loosened, a mantle flung over his body, was given a drink. Then, sitting on the edge of the rack, he spoke freely.

"Lord, in that far country are many wondrous things, but most wonderful of all are these lambs, which are produced from the ground of certain valleys—"

"From the ground?" broke in Al Mansur angrily. "You Christian dog, do you dare to mock me?"

Odoric cringed. "Heaven forbid, Lord! I tell the truth. These are not lambs of flesh and blood; they are a certain fern or vegetable, in the shape of young lambs curled up, covered with a long hairy growth. The people of those parts gather this growth, which is pale gold in color, and after certain washings, ship it to our agents—"

Al Mansur flew into a rage. "By Allah, you shall be flayed alive and then impaled, if this be a lie! And I can get the truth of it." He whirled. "Send for the Hadji Khalid ibn Batuta, of Khorasan—quickly, quickly!" Servants darted away, and he looked down at Odoric with flaming eyes. "That man has traveled through all countries. He'll know if there's any truth in this fantastic story. Meantime, go on; give a list of the Lochias agents, and where to reach them."

ODORIC was straining haggard eyes at the woman's figure.

"Pardon, lady, pardon! I had to tell," he broke out imploringly.

"Better if you had let your tongue be cut out—or if I had done it for you!" she replied bitterly. "Now all is lost, all!" And dropping her head in her hands, she was shaken by sobbing grief. Al Mansur glanced from one to the other, snapped an order at the Goth, and Odoric began to dictate the names and addresses of the Lochias agents who gathered and shipped this fabulous material.

In the midst, arrived the breathless Hadji, a wrinkled, filthy old Persian, but a holy man who had made the great

pilgrimage, as his green turban signified. He was, indeed, a traveler of high renown in his day.

Al Mansur put the matter before him; and stroking his white beard, he nodded.

"Beloved of Allah, I have not been in that far land of Tartary beyond the Bosphorus, but I have been close to it, even past Byzantium," he said gravely. "I know not about the golden wool, but I have heard tales of such lambs. Some say they are real lambs, whose navels are attached to the ground; men who had seen them, informed me that they were a certain fern or vegetable which bore a fancied resemblance to the fetus of a sheep.* It is evident this man speaks the truth."

IN the silence, the sobs of the Lady Daphne became audible. Al Mansur stooped, took her hands, and gently lifted her to her feet.

"Grieve not, dear lady," said he, joyously exultant. "This infidel, on whom you had set your heart, has told everything. Because he has betrayed you, I'll have him drawn apart by four horses—"

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "Let the infamous wretch go free, this minute!"

"Yes?" He endeavored to pierce the veil that hid her face. "Very well—if you promise to receive me at moonrise."

"I promise," she replied in broken humility. "Everything is lost, now that you've learned the secret; all is lost, lost! Let me have one last word with this coward, whom I was so blind as to love."

Al Mansur laughed. "A dozen, if you like!"

Slipping a hand beneath her robe, she went to the tortured white figure. From her lips came swift words in Latin, which none of the Arabs understood.

"My dear, my dear, you've done nobly; I'm proud of you! Get the boat ready. Be under the windows of the east wing, a little after moonrise—"

Then her voice shrilled up in vehement, furious reproaches. Her hand flashed from under her robe; in it was a slender jeweled stiletto, a deadly little weapon. She was in the very act of stabbing Odoric, when Al Mansur caught her wrist and wrested the dagger away.

"What, your love for him has so soon turned to hatred?" he cried, laughing. "Then your hatred for me may as quickly turn to love, if Allah wills! Now tell us how this wool of the Scythian lamb

*The old Persian had it right; the botanical name is *Cibotium Barometz*.



"Allah!" The
gasping cry was
torn from him.
"Allah!"

is prepared. Sea-wool, it has been called
until now—"

She described how the wool was
plucked from those lambs, growing out
of the earth, how it was washed and
made ready for weaving. The scribes
took down all she said, while oil was
applied to the hurts of the groaning
Odoric. Then Al Mansur took her hand
and led her to an inner door, where two
of the palace women were waiting.

"Go with them, fair lady," he said.
"An oath is an oath; the Goth goes free
here and now, with rewards. And you?"

"Lord, I have promised," she averred.
"Come at moonrise; I will await you."



She was gone. Odoric the Goth,
stumbling painfully away, was given gold
and let go forth where he willed. The
Emir Al Mansur, exultant, dictated to
his scribes letters to be sent at once to



"The last and greatest name, as you so truly said!"

merchants of Syria and Damascus, regarding shipments of wool from the Scythian lambs. And the sun drew down into the western sea. . . .

Two hours later, the Emir came to the apartments where his bride awaited him. This eastern wing of the palace, newly built, was beyond the gardens and its latticed windows looked out to the bay and the sea; but those windows were

above the old *suk*, the animal-market of the city. The richer the odors that lifted from the *suk*, the sweeter were the perfumes burned in the palace rooms.

Learning from the guards that Lady Daphne had sent away the women and awaited him alone, Al Mansur's heart was glad. He stepped into the room where the feast was set, and then stopped short, at sight of her figure.

"What? Still veiled? And where are the robes I ordered for you?"

A low, rich peal of laughter came from her, as she stood up.

"Could you give me a richer robe than the one I wear? But see—beneath it I wear the silken garments you sent me! As for the veil, is it not the Moslem cus-

tom that the husband looks not on the face of his bride until after the ceremony?"

His face cleared. "Ha! But I have seen your face in other days! Well, well, have it as you like." He took her hand and kissed it.

The soft, rich light of a hanging lamp touched his lithe figure; he now wore a long *kaftan* and robe of embroidered silk, girt with his sword-belt, and jewels glittered on his hands. At his gesture, she seated herself on the divan, and he beside her.

THIS divan, spread below the carved wooden lattice of the windows, was composed of cushions and rugs and a profusion of soft rich fabrics. Before it were set taborets of cedar inlaid with pearl and ivory, bearing all manner of dishes and fruits.

They sat side by side, and ate a little, talking the while; and ever the fragrance of the woman and the tender music of her voice quickened the passion of Al Mansur. When he unbuckled the belt and laid by the silver-sheathed sword, she put her hand to it.

"Lord, is that the famous sword of which I've heard so much?"

"The Bride of Islam," said he, and laughed. "Aye, famous enough!"

"Show it to me. And in return, you may remove my veil."

"By Allah, a bargain!" cried he quickly, and caught up the sword. "The scabbard is nothing; the blade is everything. It was made for the Caliph Abu Bekr—"

So, eagerly, he bared the blade and let her take it. Wondrous indeed it was: the steel was marked like watered silk; and inlaid, up and down the blade, were solid golden symbols in Persian writing. The ninety-nine most excellent names of Allah, said he.

"But the name of Allah itself—where is that?" she asked.

His laugh broke forth.

"That, sweet lady, is the jest, and a rare one! The name of God is not there; it is only on the lips of him whom this blade smites. And now, turn this way! The veil!"

"Wait!" she exclaimed. "First, there is something I must tell you. When my husband was drowned, and I was washed ashore senseless, the sharp rocks somewhat marked my face. That's why, ever since, I've worn this veil; not in mourning, as you and others have thought, but because of scars that marred my beauty."

"Nonsense!" He leaned forward, forgetting that she still held the curved sword, forgetting all save the flaming passion that engulfed him. His hands went to the hood and ripped at it, ripping at the veil. "Nothing could spoil your lovely face—"

His words died, as her head and face were bared to sight; he sat transfixed, while she regarded him gravely, silently. Her face, that should have been so soft and young and tender, was marred by appalling scars.

As he sat with horror creeping into his eyes, she leaned forward and spoke, mockingly; and he was too fascinated by that hideous sight to note how she was holding the point of the sword toward him, in both her hands.

"What, Al Mansur!" she breathed. "Is the face of your bride so lovely that it leaves you speechless? See, how young and perfect is my body—look how exquisite and firm—"

He shrank back; and—suddenly she drove the curved blade through and through him.

"Allah!" The gasping, bursting cry was torn from him. "Allah!"

"The last and greatest name of God, as you so truly said!" She leaped up, and he twisted in a convulsion across the divan. "A fitting bride for the great Emir Al Mansur—the Bride of Islam, no less!"

Her wild laugh rang out, but he heard it not; he heard nothing more.

AS the moon rose higher and higher above the minarets and gardens and terraces of Palermo, it struck down a silvery flood upon the new east wing of the palace, and upon the broken lattice-work of the windows; it fell upon a swinging knotted rope made from strips of garments and rugs, that dropped toward the deserted animal-market and was lost in shadow.

It shone upon a sturdy, battered fishing-boat setting forth upon the tide, with men singing as they worked the sweeps, and high-piled nets in the stern. It illuminated two people there, who flung back the concealing nets as the boat cleared out from the shore and the brown sails went creaking up. It struck down upon the two of them, as they looked one at another, and the woman drew aside her veil.

"There's the reason, dear Odoric! Look at me now, and never again in this life," she said softly. But he, laughing

a little, took her in his hurt arms and kissed her on the lips.

"You are what I always thought you, dear lady, what I always knew you to be—the most beautiful woman in this world!" he said, and they sailed on out of the bay toward Italy, and the future.

VISION of sea and moonlight waned and died. Where it had been, was now but the blank stone wall again. The lights flashed up.

We sat in Norman Fletcher's great room once more, and romance was dead and gone. We stared at our host, at one another, in bewildered surmise, until Cromer voiced the question that was in every mind.

"Marvelous, Mr. Fletcher—marvelous! But look here, what's the answer? Maybe I'm just too dumb to get it; still, I didn't find any explanation of the yarn about the lambs!"

"Nor I," chimed the rest of us. "Nor I!"

Norman Fletcher bit into a fresh cigar and surveyed us slowly, with his placid smile.

"Sorry, gentlemen," he said. "You put the case amiss. The explanation of the lamb fable was there; the fable that went around the world and was believed for centuries, while at Tarentum the marvelous byssus fabric was manufactured anew—as I believe it is still manufactured. Only, today, it doesn't seem so wonderful as it did a thousand years ago. What you want, is the explanation of that fabric, eh?"

"Right," spoke up my neighbor, Wallach. "Just what's the catch in the story?"

Norman Fletcher chuckled. "Why, the man Odoric lied like a good one, that's all! He started a new story that's been accepted more or less until recent years. Along the southern coasts of Italy is found a shellfish, the *pinna*, which is anchored to rocks by a foot or filament. This fibrous filament was gathered, dried, prepared, and woven into a golden silk; that's the whole secret."

"Sea-wool!" I exclaimed. "Sheep from the sea—why, of course!"

"And no one guessed it for centuries," went on our host. "The secret was jealously guarded. The fabulous stories were carefully propagated. The material was carried afar and then shipped back, presumably from Scythia or Russia. And there you are."

Again we all exchanged glances, this time of comprehension; then Wallach laughed softly.

"Well, Mr. Fletcher, you're good; I'll say you're good! But am I correct in thinking that you'll bring up out of the forgotten past the actual facts about any fable or legend or wild yarn that we may care to name?"

"That," said Norman Fletcher amiably, "was my invitation to each and all of you gentlemen."

"Swell!" exclaimed Wallach. "Then there's something I'd like to have cleared up by your machine, whether it's trickery, illusion, backfiring television, or what you will."

"Gladly, sir, gladly!" our host rejoined. He did not catch Wallach's wicked smile, but I did, and remembered what Wallach had said about proposing something that could not be fixed up with any camera trick. "Name your subject, Mr. Wallach; if a trumpet-blast from oblivion can clear it up for you, consider it done!"

"All right," said Wallach. "It's perhaps the oldest and most universal human myth, that of the dragon. When Marquette explored the Mississippi, he found huge dragons painted on the cliffs; in China, the dragon has symbolized sovereignty for centuries; in Switzerland, dragon-caves are still pointed out, among the Alps; hero myths of all races touch upon it. The latest explanations, more or less scientific, claim that it was just an allegory. That looks merely silly to me."

"I agree with you," said Norman Fletcher. "The ancient myths and vestigial memories of mankind are based on facts, not upon allegories. Very well, sir! If you gentlemen will do me the honor of meeting here a week from this evening, we'll see about it. I promise nothing, but I shall do my best."

WHEN we departed, Wallach gripped my arm exultantly.

"Promise nothing—huh! The old boy is weakening. This time, I've got the heat on full blast, and you bet he knows it! He can't pull any dragon out of his hip pocket and flash it on me. He can't work any camera hokum and get by with it. Mark my words, next week he's going to climb off his perch or else get shown up proper!"

And I was inclined to think Wallach was probably right about it.

Another story in this fascinating series will appear in the next, the January, issue.

Pattern Storage

A mystery with a steel-mill background, by the distinguished author of "Beelzebub," "Six Breeds" and other noted stories.

By R. G. KIRK

THE pattern storage sits; in its shadowy serenity the pattern storage sits and contemplates, as it has sat and contemplated many years at Mid-Penn Steel. Go back a decade; there it sits, a venerable, out-moded structure even then, and contemplates—while compassing it all about, the heathen rage. The open-hearth building towers over it, so closely that it seems to lean and threaten. The open hearth breathes noxiously upon it—breaths of choking sulphur, breaths of poisonous monoxide gas, vapors of steaming grease, menacing the pattern storage with asphyxiation. But altogether unperturbed, retired within itself, the pattern storage squats, an ancient Buddha of a building in that rip-tearing steel-mill world a decade back.

To north the slab mill gnarrs and slams; to east the rail mill snorts and grinds; to west the forge shop shakes the very earth beneath the pattern storage with seismic wallopings of mighty hammers, while somewhere over by the furnace stacks, the hot stoves change blast with a fearsome eldrich wailing. And close about is bedlam. The dinkeys hustle by with chuff and shriek; the lurching hot-pots, all be-drooled with treacle fit for Satan's bread, belabor frogs and rail joints; the files of red-hot ingots swagger past on jolting buggies. To all of which ten years ago the pattern storage said—"so what?"

Inside those old limestone pattern-storage walls is ghostly quiet, cloistral calm. Inside the pattern storage is cobwebby muffling of all heathen rage. Long shadowy aisles lead to mysterious dusty transepts, dim-lit choirs, tranquil naves. And all along the aisles, transepts, choirs, naves, on floor, on shelves, on racks, on galleries, are patterns, patterns, patterns.

Stored there are all the shapes of all the things that Mid-Penn Steel had ever wanted in cast metal. Simple and complex wooden forms are there, forms four-

square, forms fantastic, forthright and askew. Things cubical, cylindrical, things truncated-coneish. Hootennannys, wimwams, muckets, willywallys. Stout men had, one time and another, pounded sand around each of these innumerable doo-flickys, thumping the shapes of them into fire-resisting stuff; then eased pattern out of drag and cope. Into the hollowed flasks the founders then had poured their incandescent gold, so that the forms which the sawdusty carpenters had shaped in fragile wood were reproduced in indestructible iron and steel.

Indestructible, did some one remark? You would not have thought them indestructible had you seen young Samuel Forthgate Fletcher, construction engineer of the Mid-Penn open-hearth extension, come steaming into the pattern storage with the two halves of a broken, tooth-chewed pinion in his hands.

INTO that monastic quiet barged Samuel—as typical a representative of the hearth outside as anyone you would see.

He placed the two halves of the pinion on a rough pine desk at which, upon a high stool, sat a small, stooped, peering gnome; he fitted the fracture of the wrecked gear together, and he said:

"How much do you love me, Amos?"

Amos, eh? Amos, my eye! Was ever Amos any goblin name? This high-perched fellow had short spindly legs, which were grapevined around the stool's long spindly legs; and he had a little poddo of a stomach that protruded past the stool's round seat; and he had a long, long nose, with silver-rimmed spectacles balanced breathlessly on the very tip of it. They were troll spectacles, which helped the eye only with looking over. Woe to the luckless wight that ever got looked at through them! . . . Amos, eh! No, his name was never Amos. It was Rumpelstiltskin. . . . Over his spectacles he peered at Samuel Fletcher's broken pinion.



Down went Con-
noy! No firearms
had been used;
but just the same,
he had been shot.

Illustrated by
Grattan Condon

Then he peered at Samuel, and he said:
"Where's your order?"

Sam Fletcher grabbed two handfuls of
his own fair hair, and yanked at it, in
heathen rage.

"Order?" wailed Sam. "He asks me
for an order! A brother Dammer Beater

Pelter, and he asks me for an order!
Listen, Amos. The columns for the open
hearth main building leave the bridge
shop next week. The column foundations
aren't poured. This gear is bust. The
concrete-mixer's down. The Chief is up
—seventeen times as high as the old lady
who swept the cobwebs out of the sky.
I just got the seat of my pants bent for
not having a spare pinion on hand. I



"Thanks, Connoy; you— Hey! Where are you?" But Connoy, back in the gloom, said nothing.

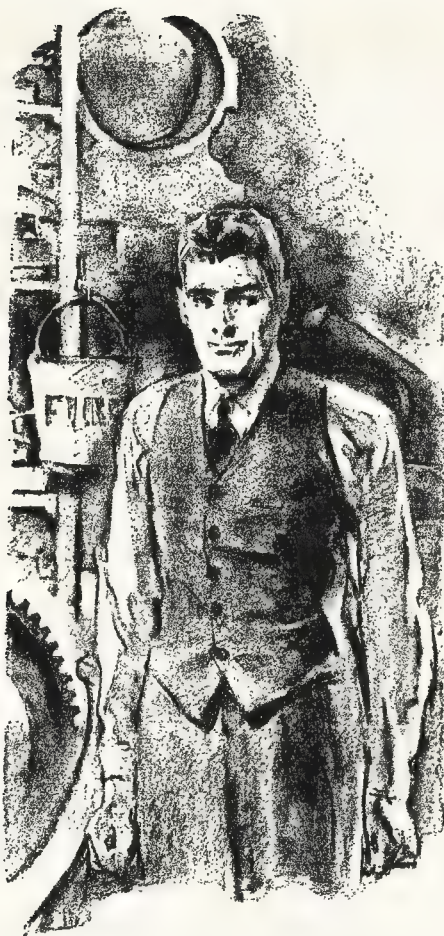
want the pattern for it, to have another cast. Day before yesterday I want it. And you've got the heart to ask me for an order! You get me the pattern for this pinion right now, Amos, and I will cover it with an order later—one framed in gopher wood, and scented with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. I am a good lad, eh, Amos? And you want to see me get along without dinges in my pants."

MAYBE he wasn't Rumpelstiltskin. Maybe a brownie. His glasses had worked back to the middle of his nose. He cocked his head very brownie-wise, so that he wouldn't have to look through them at Sam. He said:

"What's the pattern number?"

"The pattern number!" Samuel Fletcher moaned. "A brother Beta Naptha Bismuth, and he asks me for the pattern number! What would you do with a pattern number, Amos? You have a lot of

pattern numbers, Amos. Books of them. Look, Amos. The one I want is like this broken gear. Only it's made of wood, not metal, Amos. And it's in one piece, not two. And I need it terribly. But there aint no number cast on it, for I looked. So you go out there in the storage, now, and get it for me. Then I shall rush it over to the molder boss, and he will thump sand all around it for me, and have the mold ready for this evening's cast. Then I shall carry it, still hot, in these two devoted hands of mine, to the machine-shop; and old Bill Bantry, who is a man amongst mice, will put a night stiff on to drill and slot it for me. And all without any order, Amos, for they love me; so, tomorrow morning early, I shall have the pinion on its shaft, and shall be merrily sloshing concrete in the pier forms when the boss arrives, all full of eggs and crumpets. And I shall not have to go up the track talking to myself, and counting



what is in the small blue envelope. So how about it, Amos?"

Well, maybe he wasn't a brownie. Brownies have little poddo tums like that, but they wear long floppy-pointed slippers. Maybe he was the leprechaun, who wears brogans, and silver buckles on them of a Sunday. Maybe if you came over in the dead of night, you'd see a will-o'-wisp burning in the darkest corner of the pattern storage, and hear the tap of hammering at fairy shoes. Anyhow, he stood up on the rounds of his stool, and reached for a dilapidated book in a short pine shelf of dilapidated books, and took it down, and blew a simoom of dust from its cover, and opened it. Then he squinted up at Sam, and with a twinkling eye inquired:

"What's the drawing number?"

It is a certainty that at this point young Samuel Forthgate Fletcher would have fainted dead away, had nature been allowed to take its course. But nature wasn't allowed—unless you think it altogether natural that Sam should, at this juncture, get another well-placed kick. Anyhow, that's what Sam got, and it jarred the idea of fainting entirely out of

him. And behold another heathen in the pattern storage, bringing his rage right in with him.

"Broken mixer pinion, eh?" said the new heathen. "I heard about it, and I thought here's where you'd be. No spare, of course. And the concreting stopped. And the building columns due next week. And—"

"Yes, yes," said Samuel Fletcher. "And what's more, yes! I have heard about this here now unfortunate *contretemps*. The chief engineer, he told me, with appropriate gestures. And I have repeated it all to Amos here—who wants an order, and a pattern number, and a drawing, and a petition signed by my concrete gang, before he'll get the pattern for me. All the world knows about this busted pinion. The heavens are ringing with it. And what's it to you, John?"

YOU wouldn't have liked him either, this big, hard-looking John Connoy, even if you had been told that he was the youngest open-hearth superintendent Mid-Penn Steel had ever known. You wouldn't have liked the way he got to be the youngest open-hearth superintendent. He got to that distinction by ruthlessly riding down—by fairly or unfairly cutting the feet from under every man ahead of him; which, when you come to think of it, was perhaps as effective a way as any of getting to be the youngest open-hearth superintendent at Mid-Penn in the tough old cutthroat days. This didn't endear him any; but John Connoy didn't want endearment. He wanted to be the General Manager at Mid-Penn Steel—and that he finally got to be. He was a mighty man of valor, brains and force, was John Connoy; but he had no bowels of compassion. But since no one had up to then, nor since, figured how many bowels of compassion it would take to get out five thousand tons of H beams, John Connoy had not bothered to acquire any, and he got to be G.M. without them. But he left a lot of wreckage in his path.

Now he was on the way up. Now he was open-hearth superintendent; which he readily admitted.

"What's it to me?" he snapped. "I'm the open-hearth superintendent, and I'm supposed to make this steel company a lot of money. And I could do it if I had some furnaces. I need ten more, right now, today. I'm promised the first of these new ones four months from now; but at the rate construction work is go-



"Kraglianovic send ship ticket, bring dot sister for America. She name Liubitsa."

ing, I will be getting these pots by the time they're obsolete."

You wouldn't have liked him any more than Sam did. Especially that day. That day the selfish eyes, the ruthless mouth of him seemed more the features of some youthful Genghis Khan, some Tamerlane, than any youngest open-hearth superintendent. Sam Fletcher, that day, did not even like the smell of him. Sam smelled the smell of gas-producers on him, the deadly smell that warned you of monoxide, fuel of the blazing hearths that were the care of John Connoy. Sometimes gas-leaks developed; and those who found and stopped them worked in short relays, and came away with splitting headaches, and with the abominable sweetness of the stuff persisting on their clothing.

Sam Fletcher said to him: "You keep on fixing gas-leaks, John. That will let you melt more steel. We'll have the first new furnace for you in four months. Sooner, and well you know it. What's eating you today, that you come chasing me and my broken concrete-mixer pin-

ions into pattern morgues? 'Tend to your own crocheting, John. I'll 'tend to mine."

It took a crust to talk like that to John Connoy. Sam wasn't working for the open-hearth department, true. Sam was a construction man. But it took nerve, just the same, to speak your piece to a man as far along in Mid-Penn as young John Connoy had got—and to a man whose eyes were hard and dagger-gray as his eyes were.

SAM turned away from John Connoy and once more addressed his old fraternity brother Rumpel-Amos.

"Amos," he said, "there is an ancient pensioner, named Bista Housti, who has been on the pay-rolls here for countless centuries. He is now my water-tender on the prehistoric concrete mixer which was dug up to boost the yardage on my job. Bista tells me that when he was helping to pour the footings for the sphinx, a pinion broke, and that a new one was made—not got from the mixer manufacturers. If that's so, then there is a pat-

tern. And if there is a pattern, Amos, then you will remember it. I'm asking you now, Amos, without an order to my name, without a pattern number, without a drawing, without fear and without reproach, will you get me that pattern, or will I give you a swift kick in the crank-case?"

"Come," grinned Amos-Stiltskin.

DOWN the dim aisles the endless patterns stretched—thousands and thousands of them. Great numbers of them, decades back, should have been piled up and burned; but there they lay, the hoot-ennannys, the wimwams, the muckets and the willywallys, all stowed away on floor and rack and bench and shelf, awaiting just some such emergency as this one of Sam Fletcher's broken concrete-mixer gear.

How that small gnomish Amos kept a record of all patterns straight, nobody knew. No one but Amos could interpret the cabalistic symbols that chicken-tracked the pages of his musty record-books. But there it all was. There in that little row of dusty books was the whole pattern storage, infallibly recorded.

But there was a more miraculous record of the pattern-storage house than that. The whole half acre of it, ten shelves high, packed full of patterns, new or hoary, stood in perfect replica in some small convolution, in some small microscopic speck of gray, perhaps, in Amos-Stiltskin's skull.

You come to Amos, empty of all data, *sans* pattern number, *sans* department drawing number, *sans* everything you ought to know; but tell him that it is the bearing for the hoist drum on Hitty Liz, the antediluvian locomotive crane; tell him it is about so high, so thick, and shaped about like such—and after consigning you to a spot a thousand fathoms below the bottom of the bottomless pit for expecting pattern-storage service on such meager data, he would lead you down four spooky passages, around four catacombish turns, climb up with gruntings to the sixth tier of racks and tilt into your view a dusty wimwam. Then he would peer down at you over goblin spectacles with a twinkling eye and ask you: "Is this it?"

And this would be it. . . .

Sam Fletcher got his pattern. Sam tucked it underneath his arm, and headed for outside and all its raging heathen. At the door that led through Amos-Stiltskin's private grotto, he turned and said:

"Thanks, Amos. I shall frisk at your funeral, for this. And thanks, you too, Connoy, for coming along back through the fearsome dusk where dwells the bander-snatch, to make sure I got this, and came safely back. You were a great help. . . . Hey! Where the hell are you?"

John Connoy, back there in the gloom, said nothing. But when he finally appeared, his hard, straight mouth was smiling amicably—for John Connoy.

But after all that stewing, strange to say, Sam Fletcher didn't get his pattern to the molders that day after all; and he didn't have the concrete-mixer running next day when the chief engineer arrived, all full of eggs and crumpets. And this is why.

When Sam stepped from the pattern-storage dusk into the hot glare of a steel-works noon, the first wild evidence of heathen rage that set his eardrums screaming was a wheep-peep-peeping and a wheep-peep-peeping—the one-long-two-short of the shifting-engine hospital call.

IN that old day there was no auto service on the plant, even for the emergency hospital. Then, when a man was hurt, you telephoned for a shifter. And the first one that the yard-master could get his eye on—no matter what it was hooked on to—uncoupled and raced empty to the place of accident.

Wheep-peep-peep, it would wail, and go a-wallop over switch and crossing, careening round the curves on squealing flanges. Everyone knew that call and cleared the way. Every one knew that steel, once more, had taken toll.

When Sam came out of the pattern-storage building, he heard No. 6, the blast furnace hot-pot shifter, howling—saw it come bouncing down the main line broad gauge that paralleled the open-hearth extension and the building it extended.

One of his own men, maybe. At risk of life and leather neck, Sam ran and caught a handle as No. 6 rocked by. He froze fast, and got slapped around onto the rear coupling board, where a brakeman grabbed him.

"Two hands, Sam," warned the brakeman.

"I couldn't drop this pattern, could I?" Sam inquired. "Who's been hurt?"

Kraglianović had been hurt. . . .

Frank Kraglianović was one good man. He was the pusher of a little gang of Dalmatian sailors who were rigging for Sam Fletcher. That morning Sam had started this small crew of South Slav seamen

placing the heavy cast-steel foundation rings for the new gas producers. Then the broken concrete-mixer gear had taken him away. Frank Kraglianović was a first-class rigger man; but when it came to reading blueprints, Frank was not so hot. So he was soon in difficulties. He began to look about for Sam. But Sam was nowhere to be found. So Kraglianović said to little George Illić, who was his right-hand man:

"Giorgio, I am going into the gas-producer cellar of the old open hearth to take a look at the foundation rings there. I think they are the same as these new ones. If so, then I can see there how these sections bolt together. You take the gang and unload those two cars of machinery while I'm gone. I'll be back soon."

But Kraglianović did not come back soon. Kraglianović never came back at all. They found Frank Kraglianović down in the cellar of the old open-hearth gas-producers. He lay beside one of the huge ash-pans, the reek of gas tainting all the air of that dank, dim-lit place. A heavy bruise was on his temple. He had stumbled, maybe, fallen, struck his head against a casting's edge, and had been knocked unconscious. Then the leaking gas had got in its deadly work.

The shifter tore across the yard with Kraglianović. His friend George Illić rode with him. So did his friend Sam Fletcher, gear pattern still in hand. They had found Franizzo Kraglianović too late. There was no fracture, but the gas had done for Frank.

SO George Illić got to be the pusher of Sam Fletcher's small Dalmatian rigging crew. A few days later Sam stopped to talk a little while with George.

"You don't can tell me," George said. "Dot Franizzo she's no fall down, hit head. Dot Kraglianović be sailor-man. Climb up ship, climb up big sky-scrape building, climb up bridge, climb every; too much high dot man can climb. Sure foot like monkey, dot man got. What for fall down some man like dot, in gas-producer cellar, bump head like big dumb hunky? No fall down, he! Somebody knock 'em down! Hit Franizzo with hammer, wrench—key-bolt, maybe. I see t'ree, four dem key-bolt lie on cellar floor. Jus' same like heavy short key-bolt we got for bolt togedder new rig section. Somebody knock dot Franizzo. Maybe no kill'm, I dinno. Get scare. Run off. Let Kraglianović lay. Gas

kill'm. . . . Mr. Sam, I t'ink I know who's do dot t'ing. Some day I find out sure t'ing, Mr. Sam. Me, den, I fix dot one somebody. Maybe ten year from now. Make no difference. I fix. . . . Come on now, boys! Hook on dot section. Wasmatter? Me, I talk—you stop work! *Brz* now! Hurry up!"

Sam knew that this little Slavic fisherman would do just what he said. This gang of riggers came from Zengg, that picture-town along the picturesque Dalmatian coast. And Zengg had been, once on a time, a nest of Slavic pirates, the dreadful Uskoks, wildest, coldest-eyed corsairs that ever harried any sea. Many an Illić, many a Kraglianović, no doubt, had swooped down on the Turkish and Venetian argosies in bloody bygone days, freezing with terror the blood of stout and well-armed merchant crews.

WELL, finally the open hearth got built—on schedule, and in spite of broken pinion gears and such like.

It had marched northward, stretching out the existing open hearth to twice its length. It had ridden down, knocked galley-west, smacked flatter than a flap-jack all structures in its path. The old storehouse went crashing. The old cement shed and brick storage house got trampled under. The boiler shop was moved. The iron foundry scuttled to a safer place. *Puff!*—and the blacksmith shop was gone, with scattering of its grimy honest craftsmen and toppling of its massive power hammers.

But when the open hearth extension reached the stout old limestone walls and buttresses of the pattern shop, it reached its farthest north. There it stopped.

You can't tell me. The pattern storage, squatting like Buddha, there, called halt. Ask almost any Mid-Penn veteran, and he'll tell you, to be sure, that the open hearth extension stopped because Mid-Penn had enough open hearth furnaces. But some of us know better. The open hearth extension stopped its northward march because if it had not, old Rumpel-Amos would have shuffled out the pattern-storage door, and looked upon the hearth extension—not over, but through, those leprechaun spectacles, and put the evil eye, the kobold's curse, upon the job.

But the new open hearth got done, and it started melting steel, and it melted steel from hell to breakfast for ten dizzy years. And in those ten years John Connoy slugged, battered and under-cut his

ruthless way up to the job of General Manager. And in those same ten years Sam Fletcher, traveling a decent road, an in-the-open, squarely fighting way, got to be Chief Engineer of Mid-Penn Steel, leaving no pitiable wreckage of smashed men behind him.

AND then at last debate arose as to a farther north extension of the open hearth. Sam Fletcher, Chief Engineer, opposed it. Few others did, and none of these forthrightly. For John Connoy was for it. And men had seen what happened to such people as stood athwart the plans of John Connoy, who now was General Manager of Mid-Penn Steel.

In conference Sam Fletcher asserted: "This day of wild prosperity is sooner or later going to reach its peak. Sooner, would be my guess. And when we hit the skids, we won't be needing one-fourth of the open hearths we've got. I am against expansion of the plant."

It took good nerve to up and say that piece against the purposes of John Connoy. But it took ten times the nerve to say to John Connoy what Fletcher said to him in private.

In private, he said: "John, I know why you want to build more open hearth."

"Why do I want to?" asked Connoy.

"Because," Sam Fletcher told him, "the starting of five million dollars' worth of new plant here will give Mid-Penn a sweet shot in the arm; give her perhaps the last stock boost before the crack-up comes. You can sell out, then, at the top. You can buy back again at the bottom, if you wish. But that's not white-man's general-managing, John. If you have got past the point where you can make enough money for yourself by making steel, you ought to get the hell out of the mills, in fairness to the industry that made you."

John Connoy smiled.

"Why be a fool, Sam?" he inquired. "Sure, there's a smash-up coming. Few seem to have the sense to see it; while what will survive it, no man has the gift to see. You got your safe-deposit box filled, Sam? Why don't you fill it, then? You'll need it. Why not go along?"

"Because," Sam Fletcher said, "such moves as yours will make the smash-up worse. Freeze up a lot of millions for God knows how long. Keep men from working longer—long enough, maybe, to start the wrecking of men's character. In that lies real danger—danger which a

safe-deposit box full may not shield you from. Better lay off that open-hearth expansion, John."

"Scared, eh?" smiled John Connoy.

"Scared silly," Fletcher said.

"I'm not," said John Connoy. "The open hearth extension goes ahead. Better not try to stop it."

But it didn't go ahead. The pattern storage stopped it. . . .

John Connoy climbed the outside stairs which scarcely had the room to climb along the north gable of the open hearth, between it and the pattern-storage building. It was a sweltering mid-August day. Great doors that could be slid back on the open hearth north gable were wide open, seeking whatever air might be astir. John Connoy stood in that opening, looking north. Below him lay the slate roof of the pattern storage. Slate! Limestone! That dated it. For twenty years all mill roofs and most sidings had been corrugated iron. Beyond the pattern storage was the electrical-department storehouse and repair shop. Beyond that, the slab mill. So far the open hearth could be again extended north without much trouble. It would cost a bit to move the electrical building. But the old pattern storage—three or four days, and excavating could be started on its site. A couple of sticks of dynamite at intervals along its limestone walls. But first, of course, move all such patterns as were not mere antiques. Then a match to the obsolete remainder where they sat. A very admirable holocaust that would make, confined within those heavy limestone walls. Paint would get blistered on the open hearth gable; but that would have to come down anyhow, and be re-erected at the new north end, and it would need repainting then. Besides, the show would be worth something. John Connoy loved dreadful fires. For years, as youngest open-hearth superintendent, he had worked with them. He smiled in anticipation. Something about the thought of all those never-used relics devoured in seething flame pleased John Connoy.

Down she would go, in no time, that old pattern storage.

INSTEAD, all in an instant, down went John Connoy! Down he crumpled, there at the north end of the open hearth charging floor, as though he had been shot. There was no sound of firearms. No firearms had been used. But just the same, he had been shot.



"Ten years," Sam Fletcher said. "Ten years," Amos repeated, "—and I still can smell producer gas!"

John Connoy never knew what hit him. Nobody, indeed, knew—except, of course, George Illić and his little gang of Adriatic sailors, riveting that day, high up in the roof trusses at the north end of the open hearth—they, and a good friend of George Illić, a man who happened to be the Chief Engineer of Mid-Penn Steel.

Sam Fletcher, the Chief Engineer, was climbing up the outside stairway at the north end of the open hearth when John Connoy got shot. A field conference was to be held that morning regarding the extension of that mill. Sam was the second man arriving at the appointed place. As Sam climbed up the steps, a solid, shiny little chunk of steel came bounding through the open gable. It hit the landing platform, spun, and started rolling down the steps toward Sam. Sam picked it up. It was a rivet-set—the stout cupped shape that slips into the nose-piece of a rivet-gun, to take the thousand

heavy flailings of the hammer's piston, and give the red-hot rivet-end its proper head.

Sam Fletcher reached the landing platform, stepped inside upon the charging floor. There, in a senseless heap, lay John Connoy. Sam Fletcher slipped the rivet-set into his pocket. Men were running. And presently with *wheep-peep-peep!* and *wheep-peep-peep!* a shifting engine hustled down the open-hearth main line—old No. 6 herself, who had, so long ago come *wheep-peep-peeping* down that track to get Frank Kraglianović.

THAT evening, after whistle-time, little George Illić sat in the office of the Chief Engineer of Mid-Penn Steel, alone with his good friend Sam Fletcher. Before them, on Sam's desk, sat a gleaming, finished piece of metal. Sam picked it up and weighed it in his hand.

"Sharp-shooting, George," his friend said. "One chance in a million, at that range. But why did you do it, George?"

George Illić might have claimed it was an accident. Sometimes a rivet-driver, by mistake, will press the trigger of his gun before he's ready. But that's a dangerous mistake to make. For without hard resistance up against it, the heavy set, hit by the flying piston with a hundred and twenty-five pounds of air behind it, will shoot out of its clamp with force enough to crack a fellow-workman's ribs, or maybe knock him whirling off a scaffold to his death.

George could have called it accident, but George said:

"Ten year ago I tell you, don't I, Mr. Sam, I find out some day who's be fellow kill dot Kraglianović?"

Connoy!

BUT surely, not Connoy. Sam Fletcher never had liked John Connoy. You wouldn't have liked him either, had you seen the wreckage that strewed the path that John Connoy had cut clear for himself on the way up to General Manager of Mid-Penn Steel. But Kraglianović? How could a Slavic rigger boss have threatened the career of John Connoy?

"Dot Kraglianović be my *pobratim*," George was saying.

Chosen brother; that would have translated the South Slavic word.

"See," George explained it. "Me, I cut arm little bit, so." He made the gesture of incising his left wrist. "I put little piece my blood in drink wine for Kraglianović. Kraglianović cut arm, so. Put blood in my drink wine. All two, we drink. Dot's make most best kind of broder in whole world."

Sam Fletcher understood. He had heard about the ancient Slavic rite and oath which bound men closer than in ties of natural brotherhood.

"Dot Kraglianović," continued George, "got fader, moder, little sister back in stara country—old country—Dalmacija. Dot fader, mother, by'n'by die, all two. So Kraglianović send ship ticket, bring dot sister for America. She come. Got fifteen year, dot girl. Got too much pretty face like I never see. Name Liubitsa. Dot's pretty name. Mean *little sweetheart*, English."

"Your wife now, maybe, George?"

"Oh, no. No, no," said George. "Kraglianović be my *pobratim*," His sister be my sister. No can marry sister. Me, I ketch'n' noder fellow's sister!"

"Well, pretty soon," George went on, "dot girl ketch English little bit, so she's pretty soon ketch'n' job. Good girl. No

'fraid for work. Wash clothes, wash house, push broom, cook bread, fish, cow, pig, cabbage, garlic—every. She ketch'n' job dot time, ten year ago, for missus wife dem new boss, open hearth. Name—John Connoy."

Sam Fletcher never had liked John Connoy. You wouldn't either, had you seen, like Sam, the way George Illić's narrative was pointing. You wouldn't have liked him either, had you known, as Fletcher knew, that Connoy had had, ten years ago, a centaur's reputation.

"Dot little Liubitsa," said George, "she work dot place one mont'—five, six week, maybe. Den, one day, come home, no go back never to dot house no more. No tell me never not'ing. Tell Franizzo. So Franizzo mus' tell dot John Connoy somet'ing. Franizzo see Connoy, dot day, down gas-producer cellar. John Connoy maybe laugh at Franizzo—maybe say, 'Get outa here, damn' hunky. Why you come talk to me? You sister maybe got fifteen sweetheart, maybe twenty.' . . . Long time ago I tell you, Mr. Sam, my broder no fall down, bump head like big hunky! . . . Somebody no can laugh at Kraglianović. Dot's good name, Kraglianović, in Dalmacija. Somebody no can talk like dot 'bout sister. So den my broder, he try fix dot John Connoy. Connoy hit Franizzo wit' heavy somet'ing. So now dis me, I, Illić Giorgio—I'm fix'n' dot Connoy."

"But George," protested his good friend Sam Fletcher, "that's what we call a blood feud. Maybe that's all right in Dalmatia; but you can't do it here in Ovensville, in America."

"No?" inquired George, in a voice cold as sleet.

"But the whole thing is supposition, George. All in your head. You could have guessed that stuff ten years ago."

"Sure," George agreed. "Ten year ago I guess. Now sure. Listen. I tell all business:

"When Franizzo die, dot Liubitsa come for me—broder. Live ten year my house. Last mont' she ketch'n' sick—too much." Bleakness melted from George's voice. "Now Liubitsa take long sleep."

AH, that's too bad," said Fletcher, understanding. "I'm sure sorry, George. Your sister."

"I cry like hell," George said. "My wife, she cry like hell. We all two like dem little Liubitsa too much. . . . Well, pretty soon we look through all t'ing dot girl got; and we find, by'n'by, one little

sveto pismo—what you call dot book—church book—da! Bible, sure. Ten year my woman never see dot Bible. Ten year, all time, dot Liubitsa keep him lock in little trunk. You know why do dot, Mr. Sam? I tell you. Dot Liubitsa, she's write somet'ing in Bible. She's be 'fraid I see; den, sure t'ing I do jus' like broder Franizzo—and maybe get kill too, jus' like broder Franizzo. She's no want lose two broder—little Liubitsa."

FLETCHER, who could well recall the centaur code of morals of John Connoy, guessed, before George ever told him, what little Liubitsa Kraglianović had written in her Bible.

"Ten year ago," George said, "come *bebitsa*, my house. No stay long—t'ree, four day—dot little boy; den go sleep, jo wake up. Me, I tell everybody, baby come for me, my wife. But Bible no can tell some lie, like Illić. Nobody never write some lie in Bible. If try do dot, all finger die, quick, right away, like bone. Dot little *sveto pismo* tell true who belong dot baby. Say Kraglianović Liubitsa—John Connoy."

Sam Fletcher always liked George Illić. You would have liked him too. Had you been Sam, you would have sat there at your desk a long time, too, as Sam did after George had gone, wondering what you would do if John Connoy should die.

That little Slavic Bible, which proved everything, justified everything, to George Illić, would prove nothing, justify nothing to a jury. As first assumed, the death of Kraglianović might still be accidental. Even Sam Fletcher, who liked George, and did not like John Connoy, saw that. The little Slavic Bible could show only a possible cause for conflict. It was no proof of conflict. There was no such proof. No weapon had been found, nor anything like a weapon. Nothing, at least, but two or three short, heavy key-bolts lying about on the gas-producer floor. But examination showed that these had not been handled.

If the General Manager of Mid-Penn Steel should die, and the Chief Engineer of Mid-Penn Steel should tell about the rivet-set locked in his desk drawer, it might go very hard with Illić Giorgio, who was the C.E.'s friend. He was in a worrisome spot, was the Chief Engineer. It would have placed a very heavy weight upon him to remain an accessory after such facts as he had knowledge of.

For days John Connoy lingered, and for days Sam Fletcher wondered what he'd

do if John Connoy died. And then, one day, to his inexpressible relief, he found all that perplexity cleared up.

That day Sam Fletcher, passing the pattern storage, felt the urge to stop and chat there awhile—for in the old pattern storage was cathedral quiet, coolness, dimness; surcease from the harrying pressure of the mills. The old walls were thick silent limestone walls, protecting, friendly; the floor and roof-beams unbelievable white pine, now no more to be had, product of Pennsylvania hills when they were still, in truth, Penn's Woods. From all the patterns stored there, tier on tier, came woodsy odors, soothing, calm and sweet, as though the trees from which they had been made were trying still to spread a forest's benediction.

Sam Fletcher often felt the need of calming down. And so occasionally he stopped in at the pattern storage, as at some well from which to draw a draft of sanity in the middle of a dizzy month.

"How, Amos," said Sam Fletcher.

STILL there—Amos, eh? And still a-peering over those troll spectacles.

"How are all the old skeletons in Mid-Penn's closet behaving themselves these days? Have any trouble keeping order, Amos, back there in the gloom?"

Amos smiled.

"They are upset," said Amos. "Ever since John Connoy was struck down, the old ones, far back, have been whispering among themselves. I have been hoping that you would drop in. I have wanted to take you back with me in the shadows, to listen, with me, to the whispering. . . . Come."

He climbed down off his tower-of-Pisa stool, and beckoned with a sidewise motion of his head that would have jerked from the end of his long nose any but magic spectacles.

Together he and the Chief went down the dusty aisles between the patterns.

"Tell me," said Amos, as they walked along. "The plant is full of stories since John Connoy's accident. Is it true that George Illić and his fishermen were up aloft where he got hurt?"

"Yes," said the Chief, "they were. But not directly over him. They were putting up a cat-walk for the crane repairmen in the roof trusses three bays south of the gable end. Nothing they could have dropped could possibly have hit him."

"Nothing they could have thrown?"

Ahead of Samuel Fletcher the gnomish little figure shuffled through the shadows. Sam would have liked to see the Puckish eyes above the silver spectacles at that question.

"Nothing heavy enough to strike the blow that may yet kill John Connoy."

"That Illic," Amos asked, "he is a Slav?"

"Yes."

"I've heard it said these people hold a life for a life."

"In old days, yes."

"Are ten years back old days?"

"What are you driving at, Amos?" asked Sam Fletcher.

"Ten years ago a Slav with some outlandish name was found dead in the gas-producer cellar. Connoy was super down there, then. Wasn't the dead man Illic's boss—his countryman?"

"More," said Sam Fletcher, "—his chosen brother."

"I knew I heard them," Amos said, "—those oldest patterns whispering."

Long beams of brilliant sunlight lanced the gloom, and dancing motes swarmed out of shadow into shadow, crossing them. The two men walked with footfalls muffled on the velvety dust, and turning labyrinthine corners, came suddenly to a place where the Chief Engineer drew a sharp breath and said, "Right here," and raised a hand, and lifted down the pattern of a pinion gear.

"Ten years," Sam Fletcher said.

"Ten years," repeated Amos, "—and I still can smell producer gas!"

Monoxide! In that small convolution in the skull of Amos, where patterns by the hundreds and the thousands stood in perfect replica, even faint odors were arranged in order. Faint odors ten years gone. Sam Fletcher suddenly remembered. A sweetly nauseating scent, tainting the fragrance that still emanated from the sun and rain and leafy wholesomeness of Penn's great woods. Monoxide, clinging to the clothing of the steel-hardest, steel-coldest open-hearth superintendent Mid-Penn Steel had ever had.

"If you had anything to hide," asked Amos, "where could you better hide it? Remember, Sam? He came in here with us. He stood here. He came out last that day. He lingered in these shadows. Let us look."

Above the little pinion pattern stood a hollow shape. What part at Mid-Penn that odd shape had ever played, Sam Fletcher could not picture. It was too

old for Sam; obsolete, little doubt, ten years ago. An outlet hole of some sort gave access to the black inside of it. Amos put in his hand.

"Careful," Sam Fletcher said, as sure as though he could see through the wood. "Careful—for fingerprints."

And fingerprints there were, preserved by ten years of impalpable, falling dust that brought them out as clearly as though by powder sprinkled by some expert in such things. Fingerprints on a heavy short key-bolt—and on a corner of the thick square head, a dark stain.

AND so the pattern storage sits, in its shadowy serenity; but compassing it all about, the heathen do not rage as heathenishly as of old. Year after year of empty, idle hot-pots, year after year of quiet slabbing mills, of unjarred earth beneath the forge shop's hammers, of chuff-less dinkeys waiting with heart-breaking patience in the locomotive shop, have tamed all heathen rage. Long rows of empty hearths now also sit in shadowy serenity with time to contemplate; although far down the charging floor, good fires do now begin to glint and slant again through door-cracks and port fissures as the cold hearths number less, and the hot hearths march slowly north again. But thanks to the serene old, sane old pattern storage, twenty additional new furnaces have not stood in idleness, freezing up millions on their black hearths through the troubled years.

Ten years ago the open hearth reached its farthest north. John Connoy did not force it farther—did not tramp flat the ancient pattern storage with unsound expansion.

John Connoy, when he got back to his desk at last, stayed but a little while. Doctors had said he was entirely recovered from his mysterious concussion. But John Connoy found that he could not yet stand up against the strain of a steel-works day; so he departed from Mid-Penn Steel—America—for a year, two years, no man knows just how many years, of travel. He has not yet returned.

For when John Connoy got back to his work, he found his office full of flowers; and on his desk a gratifying stack of letters of congratulation. But holding down the stack of letters was no pretty section of steel rail, machined and burnished to a mirror brightness—which was his favorite paper-weight; but instead, wrapped with strange care in a clean handkerchief, was a heavy key-bolt.

Batavian

By

JAMES FRANCIS
DWYER

JAN KROMHOUT, the big Dutch naturalist, who was familiar with every dark corner of Malaysia told me this story of Karl Behren and his wife Lila, who was known throughout the East as the "Batavian Goddess." As Kromhout was an intimate friend of Karl Behren, his account of the strange affair is based on first-hand information. There are other versions of the Behren tragedy, but Kromhout's story is the only true narrative.

The telling was prompted by a triangle affair in the menagerie of the naturalist. A shortage of cage-space had forced the Dutchman to place a beautiful female rhesus in the compartment occupied by a pig-tailed macaque who possessed to the limit the ugly attributes of his tribe. Prior ownership of the cage gave the pig-tailed one ideas. He considered the lady rhesus as a piece of property, and he kept a sharp eye on her conduct and movements.

All went well till Kromhout acquired a young male rhesus, which he placed next to the pig-tailed macaque and his slave. Immediately the male rhesus was attracted by the beauty of the female, and the menagerie was filled with the snarlings and cries of the old pig-tail and the dashing newcomer. It was quite evident that the lady monkey viewed the male rhesus with a kindly eye; but Kromhout did not change her into the cage of the youngster.

"The pig-tail is old," he explained. "He is fond of her in his stupid way. If I take her from him, and put her with that young fellow, he will die from jealousy. The old are always jealous. They fix their minds hard on something, and they cannot let it go. With the young it is different. *Ja*. They think they can get better around the corner. The old know they cannot."

For a long minute he was silent; then he asked a question: "Did I ever tell you that I was a friend of Karl Behren?"

I shook my head vigorously. I had heard scraps of gossip regarding Karl Behren and his wife Lila, but those morsels had come from chattering fools who had never seen either Behren or the woman whose beauty had earned for her the title of the Batavian Goddess.

"I knew Karl Behren long before he became a millionaire," began Kromhout.



Goddess

A picturesque drama of the East Indies by the gifted author of "Caravan Treasure."



"I'll kill you!" he shouted. "I'll put a stop to these tricks!"

"He lived then in the Hotel der Nederlanden in Molenvliet East, and he thought more about money than any other man in Batavia. He dreamed of guilders; and all day long he chased them. He had the money-lust very bad. Never would he look at women. *Neen*. Women meant the spending of money, so he did not like them. And women did not look much at him, because he was as ugly as that pig-tailed macaque. So he spent his time adding up figures in his bank-books, and he would only talk to the managers of the Java Bank and the *Nederlandische Handelsbank* who looked after his money.

"This was in the days when Lila Sluyters was a little girl with big plaits of

yellow hair hanging down her back. She lived in the central town, Kasteelplein, and her parents were poor. Many times I saw her going to and from school, and I thought she was just like any other little girl.

"It is strange about the East. The change from a girl to a woman is made in a matter of hours. In Europe and America it takes months, years even. There is that clumsy crossing-over period, when a girl is all knees and elbows, and when she is so mad with herself that she wishes she were dead; but in the Orient it is different. *Ja*, it is very different. Today you are buying a bag of chocolates for a nice little girl; and tomorrow she is in the marriage-market.



"She was something sent into this world to make men glad, that girl!"

"It was that way with Lila Sluyters. One day she was walking down the Molenvliet without a single boy looking at her; and the day after, she was the Batavian Goddess, with people pointing her out as the prettiest girl in all Java. She had bloomed in a night like the bulb-fields of Holland.

"She was not true Dutch. The East is the great mixing-pot of the world. There the tree of genealogy has more grafts than you find in any other place. In Lila Sluyters' breeding there was a dash of Spanish and a little French, and it was whispered that way back, in the days of the revolt of Dipa Negara, a sultan of Surakarta had been friendly with her great-grandmother. Those blood-mixtures turn out the great beauties.

"Lila Sluyters became in one single day something that stirred desire, something that made men a little crazy when they looked at her. I do not know what it was but magic. She had something that you could not put into words, something that came out from her when you met her on the street, something that told you the day was bright when you thought it was raining, something that whispered you were not as old as you thought you were. It was great sorcery."

Kromhout paused in his story. The male rhesus was chattering madly at the pig-tailed macaque, probably telling him

that he was an old fool to think that the prepossessing female in his cage had any interest in him. The pig-tail was firing back statements about the asininity of youth.

I ventured to make a remark to Kromhout during the interruption. "From your description I should think she had lots of—well, appeal."

"Lots?" repeated the naturalist. "Ja, she had! She had enough for five-score women. The news about her went out over the Malay like the news of the finding of a great pearl! When she walked out from the Sluyters house, crowds would follow her along Noordwijk Straat, making *ooh's* and *aah's* because her beauty hit them little blows that knocked the sounds out of them. She was very nice to look at, was that girl. She made one thank the Almighty for His kindness in fashioning her little nose and her big eyes, and her mouth that was in itself a temptation.

"When she went bathing down at Tandjong Priok, there were dozens of men watching with spy-glasses. Not all young men, either. There were old fellows who waited hours to catch a glimpse of her in a bathing-costume. Myself, I went there to look at her. I am not ashamed. She was something sent into this world to make men feel glad.

"People heard about her in Singapore, in Rangoon, in Calcutta. They heard about her in the United States. A big cinema man in California cabled his agent in Hongkong to have a look at her, and that fellow came on the run.

"He had a contract all ready for that girl, Lily Sluyters, to sign. A fine contract. She was to get thousands of dollars, with an automobile, and a big house at the place where they make the pictures in California; and her mother and her father saw their fortunes made. We Dutch have a proverb which runs: '*Dochters zijn broze waren.*' Daughters are fragile ware. Those old Sluyters wanted to make all the money they could out of their daughter, but they were a bit nervous about her going to America. The agent argued with them; then, just as they were going to sign that contract, something happened. Ja, something big happened.

"I have told you that Karl Behren never looked at a woman. He did not see them when they brushed against him on the Molenvliet when he was going to and from his hotel. And because he was as ugly as that pig-tail in the cage, few

women bothered to look at him. Well, the day that the Sluyters were going to sign the contract for Lily to go to that place called Hollywood, Karl Behren got a shock. Lily Sluyters looked at him, and he looked at her.

"People who were near said later that he stopped, rubbed his eyes, and gurgled like a crazy man. Lily Sluyters did not stand around to watch him. She had seen a few fellows act just like Karl Behren. She went tripping along to her father's house; and Behren, when he got the use of his legs, turned and followed.

YOU will understand the situation: Karl Behren had a million guilders, and he was right there in Batavia. That was nice for Father and Mother Sluyters. They could see Lila any time, if she was married to Karl Behren, and they could see some of his guilders too. This picture place in America was a long way off; so when old Karl put his offer to Lila's parents, they said '*Ja!*' very quickly. Karl Behren was the richest Dutchman from Penang Gate to Meester-Cornelis.

"Karl Behren was a man who did things in a hurry. He and Lila Sluyters were married two weeks after he had asked for her hand. There was a riot in Jacatra Road when they were coming back from the church. Everyone wanted to get close to the bride. Men fought with each other, and women were knocked down and trampled on.

"Behren walked with his long guilders-hunting nose in the air; but he got mad when the young fellows clawed and scratched with each other to get close to Lila. Behren did not like those young fellows. Not much. When you are fifty-three and just married to a girl of seventeen, you do not think much of young men. Karl smacked at some of those laughing youngsters who got too close to his bride. Smacked at them, and swore quietly to himself.

"Lila did not mind. She smiled at the youngsters when they cheered her; and once she tossed a flower from her bouquet to a boy named Pete de Vries who was her playmate before that day when she jumped from a little girl into a beauty that men ran to look at. Pete de Vries could not understand that change. He was crying as he ran along close to her. Crying, and calling Karl Behren some nasty names. He was a strong boy, this Pete. Young but strong.

"That evening there was a big banquet at the Hotel des Indes. This Pete de

Vries pushed into the room, and when Karl Behren was counting the guests so that he wouldn't be charged one guilder more than the exact price, this Pete ran along the room, took Lila in his arms and kissed her. Behren called to the servants and told them to throw the boy into the road. It took seven waiters to toss him into the Molenvliet. *Ja*, seven!

"Old men are fools. Karl Behren thought that when Lila was his wife, all those young fellows would stop looking at her. But those boys could not stop. She still had with her that something that I was telling you about. To the boys, she was just as tempting as honey to a bear. She made their mouths water just like the mouth of a leopard when he sees a nice little deer coming to a water-hole where he is waiting. She was—*Ach*, she was the sweetest thing in all Batavia, and it would not have been right if those boys did not look at her!

"Karl Behren had built a big house in the Weltevreden quarter for his bride; and when he saw that those young fellows would not stop looking at Lila, he put a high fence around the house. But lots of those boys could climb fences; and the best climber of them all was that Pete de Vries, who had played with Lila when she was a little girl. *Ja*, he could climb well. He would shin up to the top of that fence and watch till Lila came into the garden. To Pete, she was what the sun is to a mango tree.

"It is very silly for an old man to marry a young girl. It is the worst kind of foolishness. That idiot Karl Behren gave up his business so that he could stay at home all day and keep those young fellows from peeping at his wife. Mind you, it was not Lila's fault. She was a good woman. She kept her eyes on her shoon when she walked along Rijswijk to Olislaeger's jewelry shop to spend some of Behren's guilders; but—well, she was so beautiful that men could not help but stare."

KROMHOUT paused as the uproar between the pig-tailed macaque and the rhesus became deafening. Other occupants of the menagerie joined in. A black ape took the side of the pig-tailed macaque, and urged him by excited yelps to climb into the cage of the offending rhesus and knock his block off. A capped langur and three red howlers were all for the male rhesus, screaming encouragement when he shook the wire netting that separated him



Every animal in the collection understood the reason for the combat. . . . They had sensed its coming.

from the pig-tail and the lady who had attracted his eye. The big Dutchman pulled down a piece of matting that shut off the view of the howling monkeys; then he spoke gravely to the disputants. The pig-tail and the rhesus appeared to listen, and for a time there was peace.

Kromhout resumed:

"Karl Behren was as spiteful as a wounded *kraik* about those men staring at Lila. And the more people heard about Lila, the more trouble he had. The guides that waited down at Tandjong Priok to get the tourists who climbed down from the big steamships were told about Lila. Before her beauty made her famous, those guides would chatter to strangers about the Sacred Cannon, the fish-market at Pasar-Ikan, and Peter Erberveld's Skull on Jacatra Road; but they found those tourists were more interested when they heard of the Batavian Goddess. When the tourists smacked their lips and said they would like to see a goddess, the guides rushed them up to the big house in Weltevreden, and told them to peep through the holes in the fence. Karl

Behren closed up a lot of those holes, but the boys cut new ones. It was a sad business, but people could not keep from smiling as they watched.

"Six months after his marriage, Karl Behren began to show the strain of keeping men from looking at his wife. I met him one day on Kali Besar, and he spoke to me. There was that little dancing light of madness in his eyes. 'Kromhout,' he said, 'those damn' fools are driving me insane. They will not stop gaping at my wife.'

"It does not hurt you if they look at her,' I said.

"Ja, it does!' he snapped. 'They have a hunger for her, and their hunger makes me so sick that I could jump in the Tjiliwoeng and drown myself.'

"If you took no notice of them, you would not suffer,' I said.

"How can I shut my eyes to them?' he screamed, and his voice as he asked me that question was so loud that all the people turned and stared at him.

Pen drawings by
Mr. Dwyer's fellow-
Australian John
Richard Flanagan.



'Listen!' he shrieked. 'I see the damned fools in my dreams! See them peeking through the holes in the fences! I will go mad if I stay in Batavia! I am off!'

"Where?" I cried.

"I am buying a little island off the coast near Cape Indramajoe," he said. 'It has just one big house on it. Just one. We will live there. We will have a few native servants, and no white man will be allowed to land on the island. Do you understand? I will put a stop to this business. If anyone comes to stare at Lila, I will put a bullet in his head!'

"I looked at his face that was black with temper, and I thought it best for everyone if he went away from Batavia. Pretty wives are always a trouble!

"All the friends of Karl Behren and Lila saw them off on the big launch that Karl hired to take them to their new home. That boy Pete de Vries was there, you bet. And there were hundreds of other boys, and middle-aged men, and

old men. They thought they were having a last look at Lila, and they were sad. Very sad indeed. But the wise ones who had listened to Karl Behren thought it best that he should go. They were glad when the launch swung away from Tandjong Priok."

Once again the animal triangle halted the narrative. The lady rhesus came mincingly to the netted division between the cages and looked demurely at the male of her own race on the other side. The pig-tail macaque, his ridiculous six-inch tail expressing his indignation, attempted to drag her away. Once more the black ape advised the ugly one to tear down the netting and knock the head off the interfering rhesus.

Kromhout regarded his charges. "I think she has a lot of that something you call appeal," he said dryly. "And that young rhesus that is leaping up and down to show her how much he likes her, makes me think of young Pete de Vries."

"Was Behren's move successful?" I asked.

"For a little while," answered the Dutchman. "Karl and Lila were on that island four months without seeing another white face. No one came to it except the natives who brought supplies; and Behren was beginning to forget

those fellows at Batavia who used to hang around his house. He was thinking he was a mighty smart Dutchman to get that girl and take her away where no one else could see her, but just when he was patting himself on the back, he got a big surprise. One afternoon late, he saw a little boat coming toward the landing-place, a little boat with one person in it. A white person.

KARL BEHREN took his rifle and went down to the beach. When the boat was quite close, he hailed it. He said that no one might land on the island without taking a chance of a bullet in the head. And he said it quite as if he meant it.

"The person in the boat argued with Karl, saying that there was no food or water in the boat, that it was leaking badly, and a landing was necessary, whether Karl Behren liked it or not.

"It was true that the boat was leaking, but Karl did not care. He was very angry. He fired a shot in the air as a warning, and the boat turned and stood out beyond the reef that protected the little beach from the big rollers of the Java Sea. The night came down then, and Karl Behren went back to the house.

"He did not sleep all that night. He was thinking about that visitor. He lay awake listening, and thinking about all the trouble that had come to him because at fifty-three he had married a girl of seventeen.

"When it was daylight, he went down to the beach. It was just as he thought. There was the battered skiff with an empty water-jug rolling around in it; and on the sand were the marks of bare feet. The visitor had landed in the night and had gone into the brush. There were thick clumps of bamboo and palm on the island, and a person could hide there for quite a while.

"Karl Behren was mad when he saw those footprints. Quite mad. He started to hunt for that unknown. He ran up and down the island with his rifle ready. He dashed into the clumps of prickly brush that tore his flesh and his clothing. He shouted curses. He wept because he could not find his visitor.

"This sickness of jealousy is a terrible thing. It is the worst sickness in the world. Karl Behren had it bad. Every time he would look at his wife, he would subtract seventeen from fifty-three, and that difference of thirty-six made faces at him. Thirty-six is quite a big number.

"He ate nothing, and he could not sleep. And he would not talk to his wife or permit her to talk to him. She wished badly to talk to him; but the moment she opened her mouth, he would tell her to shut up. He would not listen to one word. He was quite mad.

"He was up at dawn, poking the barrel of his rifle into the bamboos, and he would keep at that business till the dark came down. He was red-eyed for want of sleep, and his face was torn to pieces by the thorns. It was a pity. Before he had seen that girl Lila Sluyters on the Molenvliet, he was a nice quiet Dutchman whose only fault was his hunger for money.

"That business went on for thirteen days. Karl Behren did not sleep in the same room as his wife. He did not sleep at all, but he had a bed in a room at the front of the house, looking out toward the landing-place. There he would sit by himself through the nights, and curse the unknown hiding in the bushes.

"Before daylight on the morning of the fourteenth day, Karl Behren, peeping out of his window, saw his wife leaving the house. *Ja!* She had a bundle in her arms, and he knew it was food. He grabbed his gun, and when she started along a little path into the woods, he followed her.

"I bet he was saying nice things to himself as he crept after her. Nice things about young wives who are faithless to old husbands. Sometimes when I am sorry because I have not married, I think of Karl Behren, and I am pleased that I am an old bachelor. I am much pleased.

HE followed Lila along that path for half a mile. She stopped then, and whistled softly. He did not blink his eyes as he watched. A head came out of the bamboo clump, and Lila spoke to the head. She said: 'I have brought some food and water. It is very difficult. I have tried to tell him all about you, but he will not listen to anything I say.'

"The brain of Karl Behren turned a somersault when he heard that. You bet it did. He was certain that the unknown in the bushes was some fellow from Batavia who had followed Lila down to the island. One of the fools who peeped at her through the holes in the fence. She had said: '*I have tried to tell him all about you, but he will not listen to anything I say.*'

"He thought it was surely that strong boy Pete de Vries. You see, it was nearly dark when he had waved the boat away from the landing. *Ja*, he was certain then that it was Pete.

"He pulled his rifle to his shoulder, and fired at the head sticking out of the bushes. He was a good shot, but he was excited at that moment. The bullet clipped a branch an inch from the ear of that head as the owner of it ducked.

"Behren swore like the devil and fired again—blindly, into the bushes. He was insane. His wife started to scream words at him, but he could not hear. He was crazy with jealousy. He was certain that the unknown in the bushes was his wife's lover.

"'I'll kill you!' he shouted, turning on Lila. 'I'll put a stop to these tricks once and for all!'

"He wheeled on her; but when he was lifting the rifle to his shoulder, the unknown in the bushes took a pot-shot with a revolver at Karl Behren. The bullet struck him in the throat—and he did not trouble any more about women. He was dead in five minutes.

THAT afternoon a police boat from Cheribon came to the island. The police were hunting for the person who had had the duel with Karl Behren. It was funny. You have heard of Margo da Costa, who poisoned three husbands in Semarang? *Ja*? Well, it was she who had potted Karl Behren. She had escaped from jail in men's clothes smuggled in by her sweetheart. Lila had found out days before that it was a woman on the island, by the print of her feet in the sand; but Karl Behren was so mad with jealousy that he did not measure that footprint. And he would not let Lila tell him.

"It was a sad business. That Da Costa woman went back to jail to serve the twenty years for poisoning her husbands. They did not try her for killing Karl Behren. Perhaps they thought the Almighty had let her out of her cell to do that job. She is still in jail at Semarang.

"Lila got all the money that Karl Behren left. She came back to Batavia, and married Pete de Vries, the boy that she used to play with before she became the Batavian Goddess who brought all the tourists running from Tandjong Priok to the big house in Weltevreden to have a look at her. She—"



Jan Kromhout broke off his narrative with a throaty curse and sprang toward the monkey-cages. For the male rhesus, with dexterous fingers, had removed a section of the netting between the two cages, and had squirmed into the territory of the pig-tailed macaque. As Kromhout leaped from his chair, the two came to grips.

Every animal in the collection of the Dutchman was aware of the battle. Screams, cries, grunts, and crazy chattering came from the cages. They understood the reason for the combat. . . . They had sensed its coming.

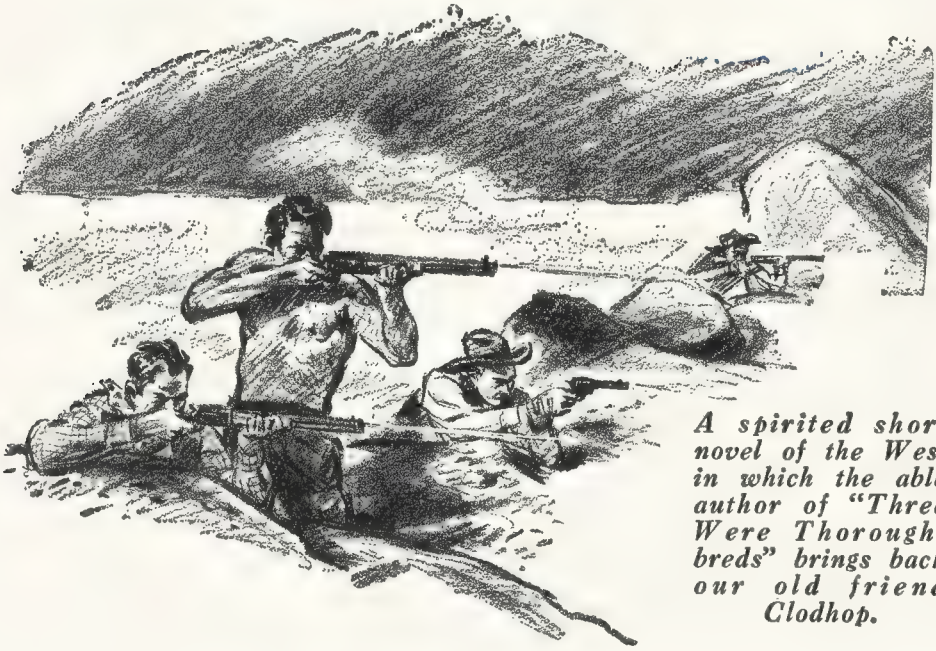
Kromhout tore the pig-tailed macaque from the clutch of the infuriated rhesus. The pig-tail was in a bad way. He was old, and the younger monk had damaged him quite a lot in the short scrimmage. The Dutchman laid him out on a mat, and regarded him with a whimsical grin.

"You are a fool!" he said, addressing the macaque. "You are too old to be looking at nice young monkeys like that rhesus. Much too old."

BACK in his chair again, the big naturalist took a drink of schnapps and sighed softly. "It is a pity that women do not stay pretty," he said. "In the East their moment is so short. Two months ago I saw Lila on the street. She is fat now. *Ja*, she is very fat. It is difficult for us Dutch to stop eating *rystaefel*; and if a woman eats *rystaefel* every day, those lines that breed longing go very quickly. *Ja*, it is sad. Very sad indeed."

Another colorful story by James Francis Dwyer will appear in an early issue.

Three Were



A spirited short novel of the West in which the able author of "Three Were Thoroughbreds" brings back our old friend Clodhop.

By KENNETH PERKINS

THROUGH the window of the general store Jim Harvey could see a side corral filled with the best horses of the Borax Range. They were the best, for they were the private saddle-stock of the cow-bosses who met this day and in this room.

One whiskered horse, however, must have got into the elect corral by mistake. At first glance Harvey thought he must be a mule, or else he had a Suffolk dam—Suffolks, having more body than legs, are the best dams for mules. The well-groomed ponies bunched together, leaving this sorry, sleepy-eared runt in a sandy corner by himself. He was like a Cholo going into a white man's bar. Harvey felt a surge of sympathy for him, because he was such a ridiculous and lonely little cayuse.

The sympathy was deep and personal. For as the little cayuse was an outcast among those horses, Jim Harvey was an outcast among men.

An hour ago, coming into town from the desert, Jim had stopped at the first bar. A drink was an immediate need—a drink for his horse and for himself. He

led his salt-flecked, heat-weary horse to the trough, then hitched him, not to the rack, but to a post of the wooden awning for the sake of shade. Then he went in to the bar.

To Jim, the sight of Brud Sinko the barkeep' was like a blue waterhole to a famishing deer. Brud was bald and forbearing, generous to grubstake, lenient with bar-flies.

Jim had no money, for he had been held prisoner by some bronco Yaquis out there in the desert. But this would not matter with Brud Sinko. Jim went in, unconscious of the fact that he looked like the shabbiest renegade that ever begged a drink. The Yaquis had taken what leather he had—his hat-band, vest, holster, belt, his Napatán boots. He had to hitch up his pants with yucca fiber. He wore strips of gunnysack as moccasins. He had shaved himself with a piece of glass, with maguey sap and amole root for soap, but it did not help. He was hollow-eyed, burned and gaunt.

"Hi, Brud! You don't know me; seems like. It's me—Jim!"

A dead silence gripped the hot shack, observed not only by Brud but by the

Renegades



Illustrated by Peter Kuhlhoff

handful of muckers and cow-hands at the bar.

Then one man said quietly: "Can I believe my eyes? Or is this Jim Harvey showing his face in this town?"

Jim gaped, his haggard gaze passing bewildered from one stony face to the other. His long, mesquite-torn, desert-burned body swayed. "I know—it's the raid," he gasped. "But the womenfolk were saved. I heard that much."

"Thanks to you, Harvey?" an old squatter said sarcastically. "—He lets six men get rubbed out, then tells us about womenfolk."

In his anxiety to know what really had happened, Jim ignored this comment. "Mary Divens," he said, "—is she all right?"

"It was her sister told us how you left your post so the Yaquis got in."

"But Mary Divens—and the little baby. The child was ailing—"

"A lot you cared about the baby when you ran away."

Jim doubled his scratched fists and turned. But it was the shriveled old squatter who had just spoken. "You're lying, you chin-whiskered little tick!"

Brud Sinko said impatiently: "The baby's alive; so's the two womenfolk. And if that's all you came in here for—" He flicked his towel toward the door.

"Brud, give me a drink," Jim said.

"This bar's for whites."

"Damn your hide, Brud, I want a drink of water."

"Use the horse-trough."

Jim's fingers closed about the rough skin. "Where's Mary Divens, you?"



No one laughed. Jim turned to the door, passing a thick-necked cow-hand who spat indefinitely at the sawdust. Jim's fingers closed about the rough leather skin above the man's bandana. "Where's Mary Divens, you?"

The cow-poke was not bullied, even though the fingers were hard as hickory. "She's at the hotel," he managed to choke, "and hankering to tell you a thing or two, I hear."

Jim knocked him down.

With the crowd well silenced, he went out to his horse and led him down the street. A man on the board sidewalk turned into a *baile*-house, and four men came out staring. One of them said:

"It's him, all right, the yellow-livered sheep-man!" A seventeen-year-old boy picked up a stone and threw it at Jim.

Saloon doorways began to fill. Cat-calls and jeers sounded in Jim's ears.

A cow-hand whom Jim had known when he caught wolves for the Four Star slouched out of the hay-and-grain store. He had been suspected of working for a meat-stealing ring, but Jim had helped to prove him innocent. "Hi, Snook, I want to talk to you. Come along to the hotel," he said.

"You aren't talking to me, I hope."

A crowd began to form, following him. "Wait a minute—you got to fight now."

They were all saying it—cattle-hands and sheep-men both. "Fight? Jim Harvey fight!" a percentage girl from a tent *cantina* whooped. "That's a good one!"

The blacksmith had come from his shop. He approached behind Jim and tripped him. Jim spilled awkwardly to his knees but snapped up, his eyes glaring, half crazed. A fist from behind hit the base of his skull. He stood rocking, fighting against many fists.

"That's it! Whop him! Break his yellow bones! A gun-whopping is what he ought to have!"

"Lay off and let me have him," a calm voice said.

Jim stood like a spraddle-legged colt trying to focus his eyes on the big body and the brass-knobbed star of the Sheriff, Tub Murchoree. A merry-go-round of faces circled that central beefy figure, spreading in a queer dilation like the wavering circles in water.

Tub Murchoree's arm was thick and comfortable, but under the layer of tallow there was iron. Jim leaned on it, relieved. At least the law would help him.

"Thanks, Tub."

"Thanks, hell! I'm taking you to face the survivors of that raid—the women-folk you deserted."

"Deserted! Tub, what do you mean? I— There's lies been told about me, Tub. I didn't desert anybody!"

"You—what!"

Jim raised his voice above the jeers. "I left my post, sure, but—"

"And you dickered with the Yaquis and saved your own hide."

"I went to dicker with them, yes. But I— Some one's been lying. I can explain it all, Tub, if you'll let me see Mary Divens first."

"It's right where I'm taking you."

They went through the lane of scowling men. The heat and scorn of them struck Jim's eyes like an intolerable blaze of desert sun.

INSIDE Murchoree's general store, which was the largest room in town, the storekeeper-sheriff led Jim to a cracker-box behind a counter, and left him there with a seven-foot deputy.

Jim flopped to the box and looked up helplessly. "Listen, Joe. I'm not under arrest!"

The deputy shook his head grimly. "Can't arrest a man for running away. But you just set there and don't get up."

"I didn't run away, Joe. I'll tell you what I did, I—"

Joe Sondergarde sat on a flour-barrel. "Don't talk to me—talk to them. They'll give you a chance. That's what you're here for."

"You folks all get out of here," the Sheriff said to the crowd that had jammed into his store. "And Red,"—he turned to Red Castine, his under-sheriff—"get Tom Barkers and Livermore and the Doc, and any cow-bosses in town. Tell 'em we're holding a meeting to find out just what happened at that raid. What's said and done will be along the lines of an inquest. And Red, go over to the hotel and get the two survivors."

"Three survivors, Tub, counting the baby."

"The baby can't testify. Get Mary Divens. It's what she and her sister says that'll—" He gave Jim Harvey a hot look as if to say, "That'll hang the bird." But he merely ended: "That'll bring the truth to light."

Jim watched the deputy, Red Castine, go out a side door. And it was then that he noticed that shaggy, droop-eared, despondent cayuse in the corral. He felt as if the window were a looking-glass, misted with heat, speckled with horse-flies, and that he was looking out there, not at a miserable little outcast horse, but at himself.

CHAPTER II

JIM HARVEY did not look up at the veterinarian, the stock inspector, or the cow-bosses who entered.

Sheriff Murchoree squeezed his huge hulk into a chair of buffalo-horns. He faced the assembly of the town's leading men. They were all old and weathered save one—the Boss of the Lazy B. He too was weathered by a past that must have been hard and cruel, but he was not much more than Jim Harvey's age. For that reason, perhaps, he was the only one to give Jim a look—long and narrow-lidded.

Before Mary Divens came, the air in the store grew hot with the bodies of big men, and it smelled of fresh leather, of cured meat, of coffee, of fresh bolts of calico and gingham. The Sheriff's store seemed fresher when the girl arrived.

Mary Divens stood at the door, staring bewilderedly. Behind her, her sister Mrs. Blake walked with a more resolute stride, carrying a sleeping baby. She

pushed against her young sister to make her hurry.

Jim got up.

Mary Divens stopped in front of him, dead still. She was a tall young girl with chestnut hair and big frightened eyes. All the ranchers, the horse-doctor, the Sheriff, the deputies, watched her. Color left her thin face when she saw Jim, so that under the light tan she was tallow-white. Her sudden nearness made his heart jerk fast. A cool breath of air had followed her into the hot room like a soft wind over sage. He caught the fragrance of her presence.

"Mary!" he burst out tensely, scarcely more than whispering. "I don't know what you been telling everybody—but it wouldn't be lies. You wouldn't lie about me. Not after—"

HE checked himself, seeing the spurt of cold surprise in her look. Was he actually reminding her of their quick rash love now! Color had come back, up her throat and into her eyes, which flamed cold blue, like Mexican turquoise. They'd been living, childlike eyes when he saw them and worshiped them during those four days he had known her. Now they were old and hard.

He finished: "I'm glad you got home safe, Mary—you and your sister and the little baby."

She tried to answer, her back straight and her chin tilted a little so that she could face him. She was glad that Tub Murchoree broke in. "Set over here, ma'am. Mrs. Blake, you set over yonder where it's cooler for the little infant."

He tipped back his own chair, studied the long residue of ash on his cigar. "Now, gents, this is an inquest. We got no prisoner. The murderers were Chamisal and his Yaqui breeds, and they are still at large. But being Sheriff and Coroner, I want to fix the blame for so much death, which maybe could've been avoided. You already know the names of the deceased—Seth Blandon and his brother Dave and—"

"There were three Blandons, brothers, weren't they?" the oldest jurymen, a cow-trader, asked.

Irritated, the Sheriff brushed the cigar ash that had spilled on his expanse of vest. "We'll get this straight from the first, gents. Listen: Seth Blandon and his brother sold out their Colorado outfit, lock, stock and barrel, and trekked down here to a quarter-section their father had proved up on. It's down in



the Crow River Wash, and there's enough water on it to control miles of range. They brought along the widow of their foreman and her sister, who were distant kinfolk which the Blandons sort of adopted. The baby was born on the way."

He nodded to the three survivors.

"Likewise," he went on, "they brought along two of their old brush hands. That was the whole party, excepting for three guards who the Blandons picked up at Mile High, account they heard that Chamisal's Yaquis were on the ride. One of the guards was this *hombre*." He nodded at Jim.

"Now, gents, understand it was a big party, and their household effects were considerable: furniture, plows, harrows and quite some cash, which Chamisal's gang must've got wind of. Come three nights ago, the party was raided at Ocote Crick—and those of you who were at the funeral yesterday know how Chamisal raids when he raids."

The crowd in the street began pressing up on the sidewalk despite the deputies Tub had posted there against the chance of a lynching. Already the store's front door was jammed with listeners.

Tub turned to Mary Divens, whose eyes snapped up blue and wide and startled. "Miss Divens, if you'll tell us what happened at the raid? Just set up here so we can see you better."

HER eyes darted to Jim and drew away quickly, baffled. She stepped to the highest chair in the room, placed next to the Sheriff's desk. It was a gambler's look-out chair on a swivel, with a footboard elevated from the floor.

Silence fell except for the horse-flies which made the room simmer, as if with heat. The crowd at the door was tense with a brooding dangerous quiet. Farther back, the crowd on the sidewalk had stopped jabbering, sensing the expectant listening of everyone.

"Now, Miss Divens, you know this *hombre* here, Jim Harvey." He waited for her nod. "How long have you known him?"

"Only since Mile High. Four days."

"At Mile High your outfit hired him. Why?"

"Because we heard he was the best shot on the range."

"Good. And you didn't know or care about anything else concerning his credentials or his past?"

"They said he'd been a trapper and a wolver for cow outfits since he was a boy, and that he had no folks, and that he knew the Big Mesas and the desert where we were trailing."

"*Bueno*. Now, if you'll describe the whole lay-out from the beginning—how the wagons were drawn up, and all."

"At sundown we drew the wagons up in a circle." Excited but relieved that the subject was changed, she looked frankly at the ring of cow-men. "There was a cliff behind, a wide space of mesquite in front. Seth Blandon made my sister crawl into the mesquite with the baby. They gave me a gun, and told me to crawl in and guard my sister—"

"Wait a minute. The lay-out—you didn't mention the two boulders on one side." Tub Murchoree prompted. "Big boulders, high as silos. It was betwixt them that they put their best shot, wasn't it, Miss Divens?"

Her eyes dropped, and she talked to the floor. "The other men were strung along the open side, which was the mesquite patch. They were between the wagons."

"Yes, we know all about that," said the Sheriff. "But the spot Jim Harvey was guarding. What'd he do? Describe what happened."

She intertwined her fingers. "They held off the Indians till dark. And that's what saved my sister and me and the baby. But the last man was dead then."

"You've jumped a pretty wide creek, ma'am. Just *why* were they killed to the last man?"

"I'm telling you what I saw!" she cried desperately. She set off fast, as if to prevent further prompting: "It was dark until they burned the wagons. They

took all the horses and farm things, but burned the furniture. They combed the mesquite, hunting us, but then went to doctor their wounded. The wagons burned low so they couldn't hunt for us any more."

"But concerning this Jim Harvey—"

She hurried on, ignoring Tub's interruption. "We started walking back on the Borax trail, till a prospector found us and got some burros and brought us home."

Tub wiped his scowling face, definitely exasperated. "She's told everything, men, except what I got her up here to tell." He turned to her, pleading: "Please, ma'am! If Jim Harvey had stayed there betwixt those rocks, would your menfolk have been cut down from the side?"

"They'd have been killed one by one, from the front," she said. "We all knew that to start with. It was hopeless."

"You saw Harvey leaving his post."

She swallowed, twisted her hands. "I was under the mesquite. I couldn't see anything."

Tub turned to the room, which somehow had become more crowded. He lifted his hamlike hands. "What's the use?" He turned to the elder sister: "We'll leave you tell it, Mrs. Blake. You set up here."

BY now, Jim realized what this meeting was about. Although they could not arrest him for being a coward, he was actually on trial. If they proved that he forsook these two women and a baby to save his own neck, it did not matter whether they could hang him legally or not. A lynch mob needs no legal authority.

Mary Divens stepped down, clinging to the gambler's chair as if too weak to stand. She walked over to her sister and took the baby in her arms. The child occupied her eyes and her hands and thoughts, providentially, for it had awakened and was whimpering. The mother got up on the gambler's chair.

Wan-faced and scrawny in brown alpaca, Mrs. Blake raised her voice to a shrill jabber.

"I could see from under the mesquite, if Mary couldn't! Which I think she could. I saw Jim Harvey. And he had his horse right behind him. His horse was the only one saddled. He walked his horse out between the two rocks he was guarding. He was holding his hands up high."



"Mary!" he burst out. "You wouldn't lie about me! Not after—"

"Does the *hombre* agree to that?" the youngest cow-man said. This was the Boss of the Lazy B, the grimmest and hardest-looking of them all.

"She's telling the truth," Jim said. "But I'll explain—"

"Hold it!" Tub objected. "Go on, ma'am."

"The Yaquis stopped shooting a long time while he palavered. Then they let him get on his horse and ride."

"I was going up to see their chief!" Jim burst out. "I—"

"Not yet." The Sheriff banged on the table.

"He rode off to the cliffs," the woman went on sharply, "and never came back. Seth Blandon took his place between the rocks—and he was shot down first. It was sundown, and I could see. A bunch of breeds came in through there without even riding their horses, thanks to *him*!"

Her glance burned hot on Jim's face and on the full length of his lank, loose-limbed body. He jumped up.

"I'll tell you why I did it! If you'll only give me a chance!"

The horse-doctor spoke up. "According to Hoyle, Tub, Jim Harvey has a right to talk. You're all trying to pin something on him so you can arrest him legal-like. Well, then let him answer the witness." He spat at the sawdust box.

Tub Murchoree pinched his nose. "Guess the Doc's right." He said to Jim, "All right, let's hear it."

More of the street crowd slipped in. The press at the door was ten deep, the first rows well inside the store.

Mrs. Blake got down and took her baby again. Jim went to the high chair. Because of his makeshift moccasins, he shambled, even though his shoulders were straight. He sat up, turning on the swivel chair to look every man in the face as if each were a crooked gambler that needed sharp watching.

He announced steadily: "Everything she said is true."

THIS startled them. Eyes which had avoided him until now, held fixed on him. Men stopped chewing their cuds. Tub's nose twitched.

"I knew that there was no chance. Our old big-bore rifles were no good against their Mausers, except close up. And Chamisal doesn't quit when he loses a few bucks. Neither do his bucks when they're peyote-drunk. We were in for massacre. I had a way out."

They nodded. Yes, he took the way; every one understood that perfectly well.

"Chamisal was on the cliffs on the other side of the wash. It's the way he always attacks. He'll wait till he sees how the fight's going, before he sits in. Sometimes, if the party is out of water, he'll watch them dying, and keep his men from attacking. I'm telling you how hopeless we were against a rattler like that! I took a chance. I knew Chamisal's son. He was a louse, but I had befriended him. His name's Dun Chamisal."

The listeners started to chew. The horse-doctor chewed his hemp rope of a mustache. They could believe this. The old cow-trader said: "It tallies up." Another said: "We can see how you saved your hide—plain as day."

"I didn't do it for that!" Jim shot back, sweating. "I was thinking of the massacre coming, of that baby. Of the mother ailing, too. This Dun Chamisal gave me a kind of tobacco-pouch once. It was a witch-doctor's bag that had belonged to his ancestors. And he said it was good medicine. It had magic. The hell with that, you say. All right. He said if I showed it to his father, I could go through the Yaqui hunting-grounds without getting scalped. Lots of good medicine had come from that mink-skin bag, he said, saving many lives, keeping away many devils. It'd saved the sick for generations with the turtle-bones and cornmeal that came out of it."

"Say, listen," Tub Murchoree objected. "Are you telling us you could stop a raid by some Injun magic, or what?"

"I'm telling you the bag would have stopped it." He ignored the incredulous snort of smoke from one cow-man, the vast laughing puff from another, the cuds aimed at the sawdust box.

"That's good enough for horse opera," said the veterinarian, "but not real life."

The young Boss of the Lazy B spoke up, his eyes hard and glinty behind cigar-smoke. "Let's see the pouch," he said in a poker voice. It was as if he said: "Let's see your openers."

But Jim lifted his hands helplessly, distracted. "I kept the pouch in my saddle-bag, tied up in flannel and sewed to the leather, but I wanted to see that the womenfolk were in a safe spot first. The raiders had popped up out of the brush all around us before we knew it. It's the Yaqui way. Not a stir of a brush or lizard scared out, or a twig crackling—and there they were, ring-herding us. Dun Chamisal's pouch'd do the work. I told Seth Blandon that, and he agreed I'd better try it. We arranged that he'd take my place at the boulder gateway. I got the pouch out, yanking it from the sewing. It came out so easy I figured the sewing had torn free. I forked my horse and had the pouch in my hand and held it up, unwrapping it from the wool while I rode. They let me come to 'em and palaver. I said I wanted to see Chamisal, that I had a sign for him which would prove I was his son's friend. I unwrapped the wool—and found the pouch was gone!"

LAUGHTER arose. Men sliced more tobacco. "Pass the cigars, Tub." They shoved back their chairs noisily. Tub pounded for silence.

"In other words, you couldn't fill into your four-flush," he said when there was enough quiet.

Jim said: "They wanted to kill me. They wouldn't let me go back to my own pards. They took my gun. But one old buck said, if I was telling the truth about being Dun Chamisal's pard, their old chief would crawl their humps plenty unless they let me go. I rode up to Chamisal, hoping I could convince him. He laughed at me and called me a liar. He knew all about the pouch, he said, but I didn't have it to show him, so I was just trying to bluff him. After the raid, he turned me over to his squaws



for torture, but one of 'em had the hunch I was telling the truth. After two days they let me go."

"It all fits," said the old cow-trader.

Every rancher in the room was laughing and talking. The Sheriff's bulbous eyes twinkled. "Course we know you're just blowflying us with a nice alibi," he said. "If you didn't make it up, why didn't you tell the rest of the party about this here, now, magic amulet, and pacify 'em?"

"I did tell the Blandons!" Jim cried frantically.

"But they're dead. I see. Convenient, aint it?"

"There's one of 'em isn't dead!" Jim shouted. "I told Lam Blandon."

The old cow-trader nodded sagely. "I *thought* there was three Blandons."

The Sheriff explained: "There was a stepbrother with the party, Lam Blandon. But he cut off on his own, back at Three Forks. Wasn't in the raid; but he came to town when he heard about it."

Tub turned to his under-sheriff. "Red, you go get Lam Blandon. Reckon you'll

"What the blazes!" some one gasped. Another added: "Tub's gone crazy! Cutting down on his own townfolk!"

find him at the land-office." Then he said: "Now, Mrs. Blake, if you'll just take the chair again." He was very serious now. "I want you to tell these men about that dead Indian. Tell 'em every word like you told me."

Mrs. Blake gave a toss of her head.

"It was one of the Indians lying in the mesquite after the raid was over. He was moaning for water. And I said: 'Go ahead and croak. Asking us for water, you murdering tarantula!' But my sister threw him a canteen. He looked up at us and stared. There was light enough from the wagon-embers,



"Hi, amigo!"
Jim sprang up.
"Dun! How'd
you do it?"

and I could see him staring at the baby in my arms like he couldn't believe it. He said I was calling him a tarantula, was I; then how about the tarantula in our own outfit? He said one of our own men had told them how many guns we had, and how many fighting men, and how much of a water-pack."

Jim Harvey's head gave a jerk. Yes, he had told the attackers when he was palavering, that the party was well armed with Mausers, Colts and Winchesters. He told them this with the hope of their holding off the attack until they'd palavered with the Chief. It would give him time to palaver with the Chief likewise. And here it was all twisted by this fool woman, twisted enough to damn him!

"Tell 'em the rest, ma'am," Tub prompted.

"The Indian said the man who had double-crossed us did it because he was a friend of Chamisal's son."

Jim was dazed. He paled. "I—I can't beat a crooked wheel like this, folks. She's telling what she heard, but she doesn't know what it means. She doesn't know she's damning me when I did my best." He raised his voice. "I tell you, it was that mink-skin pouch I banked on. It would save the women, the baby—"

Lam Blandon, having been summoned, elbowed his way through the crowd at the door. He was lean and bright-eyed, with a flowered vest and flower designs sewn in his cowboy boots. One side of his mouth was smiling.

Jim knew that here was one man who could make his preposterous yarn about

a magic amulet ring true. But through a perverse trick of destiny, Lam Blandon was also the one man who would not lift a finger to save Jim Harvey! Lam had been a suitor for Mary Divens for years—until Jim came along. He had fought with her about her sparking with Jim, a perfect stranger. In a jealous huff he had picked up, said good-by to his stepbrothers and quit the party.

JIM'S eyes clung to him as the Sheriff called him in. Would he forget his jealousy for just one moment—for the utterance of a single word that would either clear an innocent man or damn him?

The Sheriff said: "This here is Lam Blandon, folks. He tells me he had no interest in going to the quarter-section with his stepbrothers, so he figured on running cows down in the Sierra Madres, on his own. Am I right?"

Lam Blandon nodded. He had wiped the smile from the side of his mouth and now looked serious, perplexed.

"All right, Mr. Blandon, you heard the alibi this *hombre* is making, which all seems to hitch up on one point: Did you ever hear about this magic amulet?"

"No."

"We think it's an alibi he thought up *after* the raid. But if he told you about it, then it means he isn't out-and-out lying."

Lam Blandon's eyes met Jim's and held there like a gambler's. "He never told me about it."

This brought a sinister muttering from the crowd at the door. The muttering spread out to the street like a restless herd "growling."

Jim's head rocked back as if he had been struck a blow on the chin. "He's lying!" he barely gasped. "It's because of her. He's getting back at me." He turned frantically, facing the crowd that was jamming and tussling with the deputies at the door. "I tell you he's a liar! He wants me broken, and he's doing it." He whirled suddenly, reaching for Blandon's throat, but three deputies jumped him.

It was Mary Divens who stopped his frenzy very quietly and effectually. The crowd listened tensely as she faced Jim Harvey. "Lam Blandon wouldn't be as low as to tell a lie like this, Jim."

Out of his red burning eyes Jim saw that Blandon had reached for her hand, and that she slipped it into his.

"If you're believing him," Jim gasped, "then that makes me a deserter in your

eyes—same as everyone else is thinking."

The crowd held back just long enough to hear the girl's answer. There was a quick flare of tragedy on her face as she said: "Which one of you will I believe, Jim? I've known Lam ever since we were two-year-olds. I've known you four days."

The soft, heartrending note in that voice was answered by shouts from the door and the windows, from the corral and the street. It was like a soft zephyr in the pines turning into the crashing roar of a forest fire. The deputies at the door fell back at the sudden rush. The room was stampeded, turning into a madhouse of tussling men. Every man knew the meaning and method of it. It could be told in the one word, *Lynch*.

CHAPTER III

A ROPE! String him up to the roof—out here in the street, so's we can all see him drying in the wind!"

Tub Murchoree yelled something at the top of his lungs, but no one heard him. The deputies at the doors and windows were knocked out of the way. A rope hummed, its small purring voice cutting sharp against the roaring crowd. Jim Harvey felt the noose tightened about his throat. He lurched forward, shoved by many hands. He was dragged out and down the steps, rolling.

The street crowd jammed back just far enough to let him bump to a stop at their feet. Then the shouts dwindled, giving the effect not of lessened fury but of tenseness.

Jim Harvey tried to mumble with his swollen tongue: "He lied! I didn't run away! I tried to help—the womenfolk—the baby—"

It was Tub Murchoree who took advantage of the grim silence. He had worked fast, sending his deputies out through the back door to the corral to top off their ponies. Behind the Sheriff stood the older cow-bosses of the town, all of them opposed to a lynching.

Three men yanked the victim to his feet, and one tossed the end of the lariat to a man standing on the wooden awning. The latter passed the rope through a crack in the plank roof, over a cross-beam, and dropped it. A dozen hands tallied on.

It was then that Tub Murchoree fired. He fired into the air, although it looked

as if he had brought his gun down pretty far. Actually the slug just cut the top inch of the tall peaked sombrero of one of the lynchers.

The crowd pressed back, stupefied. Tub fired again. A woman screamed.

"What the hell's blazes!" some one gasped. Another added: "Tub's gone crazy! Cutting down on his own town-folk!"

The crowd began scattering even before the small posse of riders from the corral fogged in on them, pressing their horses through those who held back, showing fight. From the veranda the cow-bosses clattered down to the roped man, and one or two of them held guns. "All you boys have to do," an old cow-man said calmly, "is to drop that rope."

It was not so easy. The street churned with men shoving each other back toward the steps. The deputies wheeled their ponies out in front of the sidewalk. One of them was dragged from his saddle. Another was cut on the forehead with a rock. A third tried Tub's trick of firing as low as he could without hitting anyone.

Tub was mad. "No smoke, now!" he yelled. "The rat aint worth that!" He lumbered down the steps as the crowd surged up in another rush. He yanked Jim Harvey to his feet by the nape of his neck, and dragged him up the stairs into the store. Then with the rope still dangling, Tub and a young cow-man carried the half-dead victim through the back of the store to the stone leanto, which was the jail.

HERE Jim Harvey came to, his throat burning on the outside from the scrape of hemp, on the inside from the heat of whisky.

The din of the frustrated crowd still beat against his ears. But this sound came from the window. On the other side, beyond the door of his cell there was a hot stillness.

Jim said slowly, stupidly: "Thanks, Tub. But what's the idea of locking me up?"

Tub did not answer for a moment. He went to the window, looking anxiously at the crowd milling in the corral and in the street.

"You can't arrest me for being a coward, Tub. I'm not a coward, and I didn't run. But you couldn't arrest me, anyway."

Tub turned his huge carcass around with a testy grunt. "You can't be ar-

rested for what you did, *hombre*, but you can be lynched for it." He stepped to the door. "I'm keeping you locked up safe till I can figure a way of getting you out of town with your Adam's apple intact."

He locked the door of the cell. "You'll stay here till the town goes home to bed. They'll be drinking late tonight—no doubt about that. But till they go home, you're juggled. What else you want—roses?"

"No," Jim said, still dazed. "I'm satisfied, Tub. Thanks."

One guard was left in the hallway—not to keep Jim in, but to keep the lynch-mad town out.

In the side corral a small posse sat their horses. After a while they got off, held their reins and sat on cracker-boxes or whisky-barrels. The sidewalk for the first hour was lined with waiting, disgruntled and palavering men.

The "prisoner" could hear the Sheriff announcing in a loud voice to the street that his store was open for business, but there was to be no loitering.

THE night wind, redolent of Sierra pines, cooled the cement *carcel*. Until long after midnight the bars and tent *cantinas* were noisy with their late-drinking clientele.

Two o'clock brought peace. Three brought an ominous silence. At long intervals Jim heard the clink of a horse's bit out in the front street, for the guards were still on duty.

Tub Murchoree snored on an Army cot in the front room. In the back corral another deputy spread out a Spanish card pack on the rain-barrel, dozed, walked over to the chow cart, came back unroping the husks of a tamale. An hour later he went over to a saloon shanty which had stayed open all this night.

Again the guard came back and went to sleep sitting on the rain-barrel. It was as if all of Borax dropped to sleep with him. But Jim knew this was a delusion. He saw the shadows of men on white dust in front of saloon shacks. He saw cigarette tips blinking fast in the dark beneath the wooden awnings. One man actually passed through a band of light from the open saloon and Jim saw a coiled rope slung over his arm. Borax was waiting only for its chance.

The fire in the box stove out in the hall smoldered down and the deputy out there slouched, silent except for a steady clack of false teeth on his tobacco cud.

The clacking stopped with a light bump as if he had thought of something which brought his jaws together grimly. He must have slid easily from his chair and dropped to the floor, Jim thought, for his body made the definite smack of a saddle-pack thrown on cement.

A moment later a flat-nosed brown face peered through the bars, eyes glittering like a trade-rat's in the kerosene light.

It was the half-breed son of the Yaqui chief, Chamisal.

"Hi, amigo!"

JIM sprang up. "Dun! How'd you do it?"

"A knife in the back—while he chew tobacco like a cow." Dun Chamisal fumbled with the keys he had frisked from the deputy's body.

"But Dun, look here! You mean you killed him!"

"Why not?"

"The Sheriff's in the front room—riders outside—"

"That's why I use the bowie knife. Objections?" He came in and slipped noiselessly to the cell window—a stocky, greasy form in canvas leggings, with a string of umbrella seeds for beads around his thick neck. He turned. "All right, *amigo*. We ride!"

"You're crazy, Dun. You think you're pulling a jail-break. Well, I'm not a prisoner. Tub Murchoree locked me up to save me."

"Don't make me laugh. I hear them talk in the saloon. These deputies are going to let the lynch men come when your Sheriff goes to sleep. Your Sheriff is an honest man, but these deputies have decide' with the town to give you the necktie, savvy?"

Jim was dumb. This changed the looks of things. Dun Chamisal turned for another glance through the window. "That guard is up again. Maybe he go to the *posada* for another drink. We wait a minute."

"Look here, Dun. If I go with you, I'm in a worse jackpot than ever. Maybe you don't know it, but I'm innocent."

"I said, please, *amigo*, don't make me laugh. I hear in a desert *cantina* they will hang Jim Harvey, who is friend of mine. I say to myself: 'No! He will make good *renegado*, and we ride and tie together.'"

Jim was putting on a pair of boots and socks Murchoree had supplied.

"You are going to steal horses with me," Dun said blandly. "We go to the

Lazy B, where I see plenty *cuitans*, like race-horse. One is Son of Volcano. I want him. I got wire to heat and blanket to wet. We change every brand we like. Are you coming?"

"Well, I'm not going to be hanged for something I didn't do."

"Then come on. The guard is gone."

"But I'm not turning horsethief, Dun; you better get that straight. That's not the bargain."

"Don't make me laugh. Bargain between friends? You are the same as me. Both the same *renegados*."

Tub Murchoree's nasal screech came from the hall just as Jim and his liberator stepped out in the starlight.

Boots banged on cement, on the hard-packed corral ground, on the squeaking boards of the old sidewalk. Deputies stampeded from the street to the side corral. Shots blasted what had been perfect silence.

Jim slid his full length on his belly, fled on hands and knees into the brush like a low-slung coyote. His side burned with the hot scoring of lead. Dun fell. In the thick thorn, Jim crashed over to him, dragged him toward the horse down in the boulder wash.

"Damn you!" Dun gasped. "Get my horse and vamoose. I'm through."

When Chamisal died in Jim's arms, he unloosened Dun's gun, pocketed it, then slid down the bank to the tethered calico. It was a good calico, untracking as Jim gave a pony express leap aboard. The leap reminded him of the bullet-hole which burned his side like a branding iron. Murchoree and his men and apparently the whole town popped up against the starlight of the gully's rim, hurling shots at him. But the starlight which helped Jim pick his trail, cheated the pursuers. The horse's calico hide was the pattern of the dim stars, and the pattern of the sage-dotted slope.

By the time Murchoree and his men went back to get their horses from the hitch-rail in front of the jail, the fugitive hit the black coulees at the edge of town, heading for the cañon-slashed hills.

CHAPTER IV

AT sunup Jim Harvey reached the Lazy B spread. It was Dun Chamisal the horse-thief who had put the idea into his head. The only man in this world who had lent him a hand since he was down was Dun, the crookedest calf-thief



Jim
Harvey

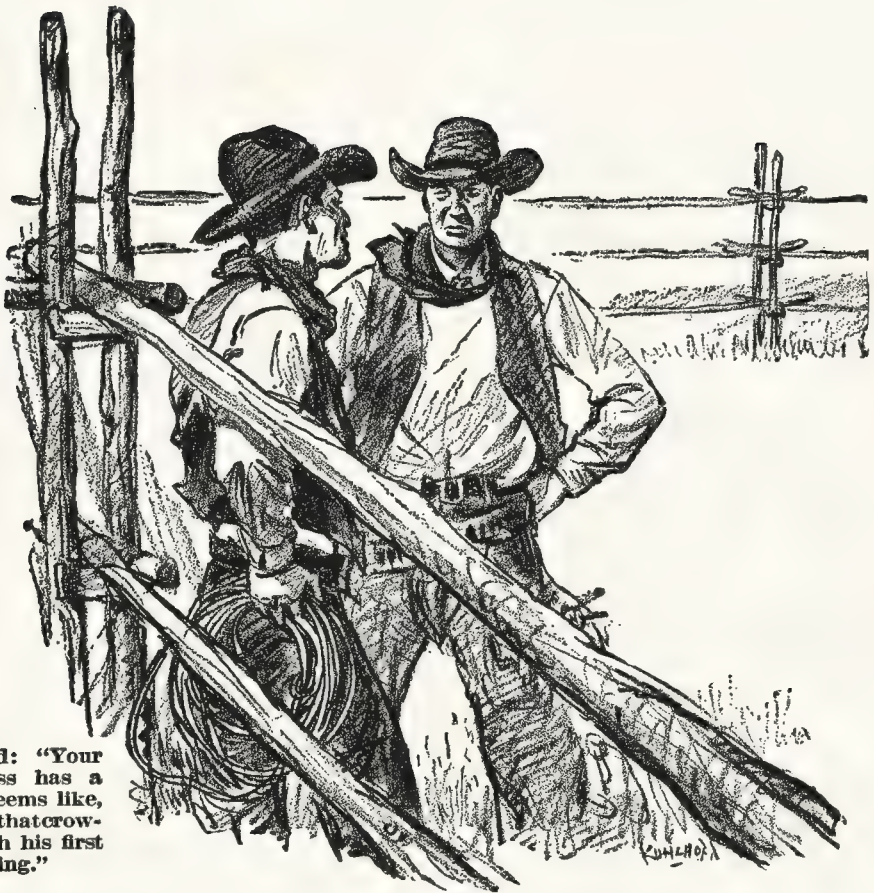
that ever cut a mother-cow's hoof. . . . Rustlers were not so bad. They were better than the hind-sighted Tub Murchoree, than the old barkeep' Brud Sinko who had refused Jim a drink, better far than Lam Blandon, who had damned his rival with that lie.

One horse-thief had been rubbed out of the world, but another was in the making. "I'll top me off the fastest horse in this range," Jim swore.

It was a fair trade to make with outrageous fortune. He was damned for something he had not done. And now they would surely hang him, for to all intents, he was an accomplice in the murder of that deputy back at the *carcel*. These were first considerations, but not the most important. He needed a new horse for the simple reason that one of Tub's random shots had sliced this calico on the haunch. He had slowed to a lamming trot after a mile of racing, then to a bone-thumping walk. Now he was blowing, wheezing, dragging along as if in desert silt. With dawn breaking, Jim would surely be caught.

In the gray light he shoved his horse against the fence of the big horse-corral in front of the Lazy B ranch-house. He expected to see a good first string of saddle-ponies, but nothing like these.

A *palo muelo* stood out, of course, light gold. But the color was too bright for the purposes of a fugitive. That silver-tailed sorrel next to the golden horse would be better. But his neck was just long enough to overweight the forehead, which would be bad for a long journey. A white-stockinged pony that had Glencoe blood looked stronger. Glencoes had speed and endurance, but they must be well fed and tended, and were prone to saddle-sores; the best saddle-pony seemed



Jim said: "Your Big Boss has a heart, seems like, keeping that crow-bait with his first string."

to be a paint with hard hoofs that would be good for dry country, and hocks that were neat and clean and lean.

Jim saw them all in a quick glance, for being high-spirited, they did not like the ragged horseman shoving a ragged horse up so close to the fence. They sniffed blood on him.

When they spooked up, whirled and raced, there was one horse left—one that did not seem so unfriendly, or for that matter even interested. It occurred to Jim that this horse had not been with the main bunch, anyway. Actually he was closer to Jim and could have smelled the blood, but Jim had not noticed him, for he was behind a jenny.

TO see this sorry, pinched-flanked, sheep-legged cayuse again seemed almost like a coincidence until Jim remembered that the Big Boss of the Lazy B had attended that inquest in the general store. He must have taken this cayuse to town to sell him for saddle-soap—and found no buyers. At any rate, he had brought the crowbait back home.

Suddenly the jenny lifted her huge head and brayed, as jennies will. The runt horse imitated her. Of course the imitation was really the neigh of a horse, but it had a definite throaty grunt to it.

The outlandish racket awoke Jim to his senses. He must get going. He drifted his horse slowly along the fence until he came to where the blooded stock had bunched together. He was careful this time, approaching them from the shadow of the water-tower. He slid noiselessly from his saddle to the "opera house" rail of the fence, hiding his *reata* so that it hung between his knees.

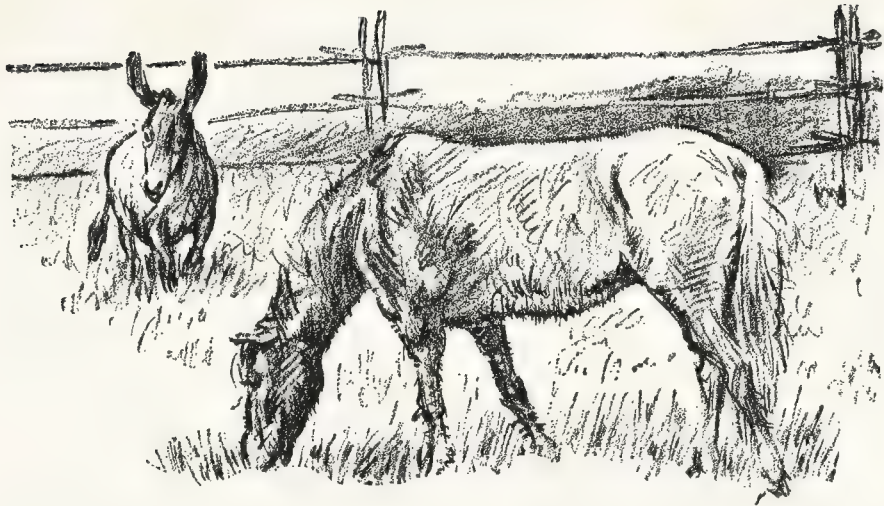
"Cooling your seat, pilgrim?" a voice said.

A man had been watching the actions of this ragged stranger from behind the tower, and now he walked up to the corral fence.

Jim looked down at the man, wondering if he had seen that *reata* between his knees. Obviously news of the jail-break had not reached this far, or the ranch-hand would not have dared to walk straight up to such a desperado. He probably thought him a grub-line rider, or at worst, a sneak-thief who wouldn't touch a horse, now that he was seen.

"How come you keep a zebra here with a lot of race-horses?" Jim's head nodded over toward the bangle-eared crowbait.

The ranch-hand talked so as to give himself time. He must have been expecting help to come any minute.



"The Big Boss used him for a pack-horse once," he explained, "when he found a gold pocket in the desert. Kind of rewarding him."

"But what is he, a horse or a jack?"

"He's both. You see, he went wrong when he was born, same as some humans born with everything stacked against 'em. Good parents sometimes gets a child that's constructed all wrong—a crookedy kid and no brains. Same with this horse. Kind of an idjit horse."

WHILE the wrangler talked, Jim let his *reata* slip to the ground, the man's voice hiding the sound. Next he measured the chances of jumping to his saddle and spurring off in a break. But the wrangler was armed, and the wounded horse couldn't break away fast enough.

The wrangler went on: "He was slipped too early, and account of being a weak foal, he got joint evil. Besides which, his mother was rustled the day he was born and he had no milk." He added significantly: "The Big Boss shot the rustler."

Jim observed: "Your Big Boss has a heart, seems like, keeping that crow-bait with his first string."

"Not that, exactly. He keeps him there on account of an example of what will happen to a horse when his dam is rustled, and he has to grow up on burro's milk."

Jim noticed that some cowboys were riding down to the corral, and that this wrangler was trying to hold his interest to the last moment.

"Burro's milk is good for invalids, but the old burro that suckled him,—that's her yonder,—she taught him all the tricks

of a prospector's canary, which makes him useless for stock work. Can't use him with the cows; thinks too slow. Can't curry him, because his wet nurse, being a burro, wouldn't let anybody curry her. And he might have been a good horse. So you can see why the Big Boss don't take to rustlers."

Jim answered with sudden decision: "I want to see your Big Boss."

"Funny, but I was going to suggest that very play," the cowboy said, as three riders approached from different sides.

Jim's decision was peculiar. He had been branded by everyone who knew him. But he would make his plea once more, this time to a stranger—not only that, but to a stranger Jim had intended to rob.

He slid to his saddle, for he could not walk that long straight road up through the cottonwoods to the headquarters house. They escorted him there, riding stirrup to stirrup, and the wrangler took him into the office.

Nick Buckley, Boss of the Lazy B, was already at work by lamplight, even though the outfit was not up for breakfast. He sat at a pine desk with a tally-book, feed and transit rates, letters. He looked so thin and hard and harried, that Jim thought he might have sat up working all night.

The fugitive trudged to him, stood a moment with shoulders drooped. That wound in his side kept him from straightening up. It gave him a hangdog look. He was like a drunk hauled up before a justice of the peace. Without being asked, he slumped to the shake-bottomed chair opposite the desk.

Buckley stared gimlet-eyed, bit off the end of a cigar and through habit shoved

the can toward his visitor. But then he checked the gesture, and drew it back.

"He asked to see you, Boss," the night horse-hustler said. "I found him coyot-ing around the horse-corral, studyin' Clodhop and the jenny."

NICK BUCKLEY was the first of the outfit who had recognized the fugitive. Most of the riders, like his whole outfit, were new to this range. "I see you got out of town with your neck," he observed quietly.

Jim's head hung heavily as he nodded. "I'll tell you about it, if only you'll send a hand to tend my horse. He was hit and needs doctoring. And he needs a drink bad."

Buckley rolled his cigar in his craggy jaws, thinking. This seemed to be a queer sort of rannihan to be giving orders. "Go fix his horse, Mack," he said to the gaping wrangler. "Now what the hell do you want before I kick you off this ranch?"

"I want another horse—a fast one."

"Oh, *now* I get the drift. You're just plumb crazy. That explains everything."

"Murchoree's after me with his shotgun posse, and he'll get me, Boss, I know that. But give me just a little time before I'm caught."

"What's Murchoree want you for? Thought he saved you from a lynching by locking you up."

"Will you listen, Boss? I got out of jail because the Sheriff's men were going to turn me over to the lynch bunch. It was Chamisal's son told me about it. Dun Chamisal came there and knifed a jail guard. The guard's dead; so is Dun Chamisal. They'll find his body, and Tub will know him. Maybe that'll prove that I told the truth about his being my friend."

"Man, are you raving? You break jail—where you're locked up for your own protection; and your pard kills a deputy. You'll go back for murder now, and you tell me that proves something. Sure it proves how you saved your hide. You're thick as rock and rye with a crook horse-thief—which adds up to what?"

"I was never his pard, Boss. We got thrown together trapping the same crick. In a blizzard we holed up together for a month. In a forest fire we hid together in a beaver house. I crawled out and yanked his sheep-dog under the water and into the house. After that, the tick-ridden half-breed followed me like a dog himself."

The cow-man waved his cigar at him to stop. "We couldn't hang you for being yellow, *hombre*, but now you can be hanged legal. Murchoree will be on the prod plenty, since you're accomplice to the murder of one of his own men. And when he was protecting you, at that! I got the same view of it. So just what do you hope for, coming here?"

Jim found it hard to get the right words. "It was something your night wrangler said out there at the horse-corral. You've got a funny-looking cayuse that's built all wrong, but you stuck him with the grain-fed string. You gave the cayuse a chance. The cards are stacked against me the same way." He clenched his shaking hands. "Look, Boss. That pouch Dun gave me—I want to find the man who stole it. Whoever he was, he stole it for a reason: maybe because he was going into Yaqui country. If I go down to the desert to see Chamisal, I'll prospect him about it. If some one else has shown him that pouch, I'll make him clear me."

"In other words, instead of my sending you back to the hoosegow," Buckley grinned, "you want me to give you a horse that'll take you out to your breed pardner's in the desert!"

Jim pleaded desperately: "I tell you, it's a hunch I've got, Boss. I won't say who I think the man is, because I haven't a shred of proof. But if I can get the proof from Chamisal, I'll get my man."

Buckley's eyes were slits burning with suspicion. "You couldn't gold-brick anyone in that inquest, *hombre*; how come you think you can gold-brick me?"

Jim stared, glassy-eyed. He felt desperately sick, his eyes clawing at a great empty space in his side. "I see." He nodded slowly. "But I just thought I'd take a long shot."

Then he keeled over.

"Luella," Nick Buckley called. "Come here."

JIM found himself on a cowhide settee looking up at the face of young Mrs. Buckley. They had stripped him of his shirt, and he felt the thick warmth of the room like a feather quilt enveloping him. His head rested on a goose-feather pillow as he watched the young woman's thin strong hands now holding whisky to his lips, now washing his wound, now binding it. As the blur cleared from his eyes he recognized her.

Whereas Nick Buckley was a newcomer to the range, everyone knew his wife

THREE WERE RENEGADES

when she was Luella Purdy. They knew her from Blue Butte to the 31 Graze to the Hucky Dummy mining country where she trailed in her wagon-store selling pins and needles to ranch wives, plug cut and blackjack molasses to trappers, suspenders and bandanas to cowboys. Vaguely Jim remembered she had once befriended a man who was wanted for murder and had helped him escape in her wagon. And that man with a past that almost beat him down, was now her husband and the Boss of a big spread.

The cow-boss, grotesquely tall and long, paced the puncheon floor, stepped to the window. It was quiet out there except for mother cows bawling around the calf-corral, for all the hands were in the cook-shack. The Big Boss turned and said to his wife: "There's dust in the pear flats. Murchoree and his riders, I reckon."

The fugitive's eyes fixed on him. The glassiness had given way to a glint heightened by whisky. He was desperately tired. He wanted a home like this one, and rest. He wanted a mate to take care of him, like the Boss' wife. He wanted Mary Divens to help him, feed him and nurse him when he was wounded. He was tired of living alone in the sierras, trapping, working as wolver for this cow outfit and that. He wanted to file on a homestead—he wanted a home!

"Boss," he cried tensely, "if you'll give me a chance, I'll square myself. I want to be squared because of that"—he stopped, but Luella Buckley's eyes helped—"because of that girl who wouldn't testify against me."

Nick Buckley puffed quick spurts of white smoke. His cigar-tip sparkled.

Luella caught his excitement. "You were in a jam once yourself, Nick. You needed a pack-horse bad. Don't forget what little Clodhop did for you."

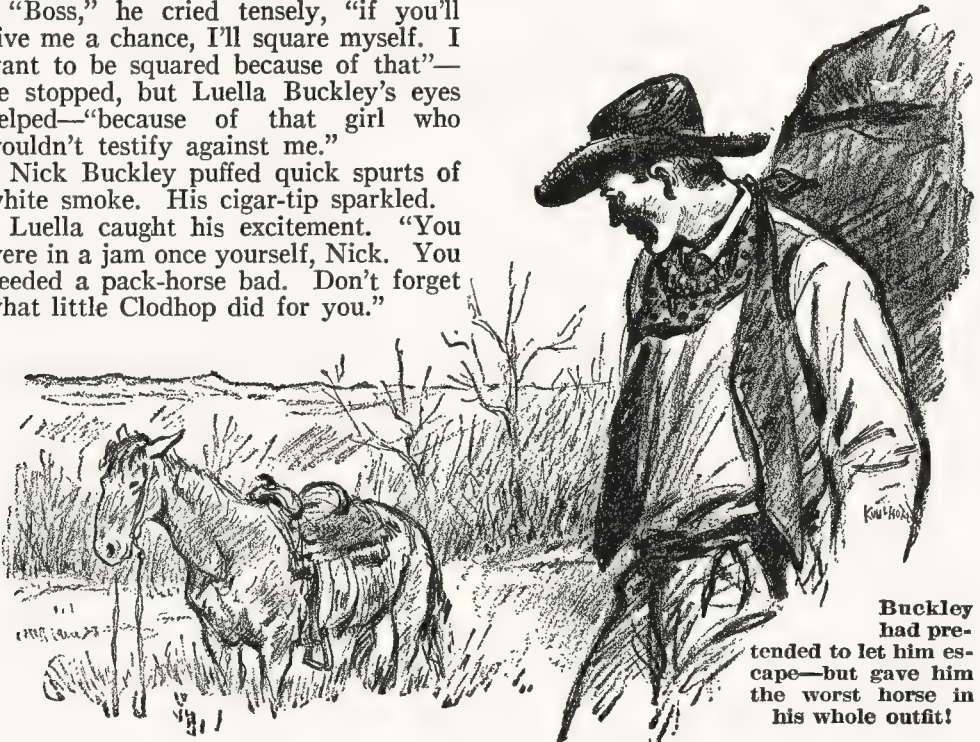
Buckley was giving back Jim's stare. "I don't believe your yarn, pilgrim, one way or the other. It's pretty gauzy. Hell, I don't know you. You've given no proof except where it don't count. I mean what you told about hauling a sheep-dog into a beaver-house. But you did prove that; and maybe the rest of your yarn is made out of good cloth too."

Jim's blood pumped wildly. Luella stared at her husband. "What do you mean, Nick?"

"I noticed the first thing you did when you came in here," Buckley said to the fugitive, "was to beg for some water for your jiggered horse. You didn't beg for yourself, being wounded, and a drink would have set just right. That's all I know about you. You thought of your horse before yourself. I'm going to lend you one."

CHAPTER V

HOOFs beat with the distant thrum of horizon thunder in summer. Dawn burned bright above the red mesas as the thunder grew. Churning dust through the cottonwoods, the posse swung into the long, main house road. Ranch-hands poured out of the door at the end of the "nose-bag" to see what it all



Buckley had pretended to let him escape—but gave him the worst horse in his whole outfit!

meant. There was no chance for the fugitive to get to the horse-corral now.

Jim stood up, swaying on his feet. Luella Buckley came in from the kitchen, whither she had gone for a canteen of water. This she slung over the fugitive's shoulders.

Her husband said: "You go out and talk to the Sheriff, Luella. Keep him out in front while I 'tend to this ranny."

She went out as the posse clattered up, curbing at the troughs of the round corral.

Buckley led the fugitive to a back window. "Figure you can make that shake barn yonder while I get your horse? You'll have to crawl on your knees, keeping behind that cedar pole fence."

"I can make it—if there's a horse waiting for me."

"You'll need one more shot." He went on as Jim drank: "I'm giving you the fastest horse I've got for desert trailing. But you got to take care of him. Ever hear of Idaho Bob's Volcano?"

"Sure. Fastest race-horse in the West. But—"

"I'm lending you Volcano's son."

"Dad burn! You don't mean—you mean you're lending me a race-horse!"

"He'll be in the cut beyond that barn."

"I'm thanking you, pardner."

"Better hit the grit instead of palavering."

Jim climbed out the window as twenty riders on the other side of the house dismounted and grouped around the boss' wife.

Crawling behind that fence, Jim passed the pump-house, a sod-and-pole wagonshed with its blacksmith shop, got to the winter calf shack. With all the ranch-hands, including the cook and his swamper, out in the front corral, the chance of being seen was slim. But it was a long journey for the wounded man. The canteen straps pulled him to the earth. His head drummed, light and dizzy; his heart slugged heavily. But a thrill was in the beat of it, for at the end of that agony the best horse of that splendid string would be champing at the bit, ready to take him to freedom.

HE wondered which one it would be. He remembered them all—the silver-tailed sorrel, the meal-colored Spanish pony, the paint with hard hoofs; it would be the paint, no doubt, for Buckley had said it would be the fastest for desert trailing. But a paint is not a thoroughbred, and the horse Buckley had promised was the son of the greatest race-horse

in the West. The Big Boss did things in a big way! When he helped a man out, he didn't give him a bunch-grasser or scrubtail. He gave him Volcano's son!

It would be the silver-tailed sorrel, Jim decided, the one with the high withers and deep chest, and long neck.

NICK BUCKLEY had had time, during Jim's crawl, to ride the horse up from the corral, leave him tethered to a pin bole, and return to the main house.

When Jim got to the cut, a gully that split the side of a long ridge, the horse was there. But—it was that shaggy goose-rumped pack-horse!

Jim Harvey let out a moan and sank back against a rock. Buckley had tricked him—the man who for a moment had restored Jim's faith in his fellow-men. Buckley had not believed Jim's story. But instead of telling Jim to his face that he was a triple-plated liar, he played this sardonic joke: a worthless, crooked horse goes to a worthless, crooked man.

The lop-eared runt did not even look up at the strange staggering form. He went on cropping filaree with the congenital disregard of any burro for a human being. But, burro-like, one ear twisted because of that curious gasping moan that came from the depths of the man's chest.

The trick that had been played was especially cruel, because Jim had spent his strength dragging himself to this gully. The gully itself was a trap, for it opened out on a wide sage flat where the posse was already spreading. There was no chance to risk a break out there. If he had had a fast horse, he might have jumped him out and raced them. But all he had was this half burro, half plug.

He lurched from the rock and threw an arm over the thick hanging neck for support—support for his own dead weight and the intolerable pull of that canteen. At least those straps would not torture him any more. But before he had the canteen unslung, the horse twisted and snapped up his hindquarters, like a jack that kicks straight backward with a vicious jab.

Buckley's joke was a little too funny. Jim swung his canteen, thwacking the bony rump. The cayuse did not mind that at all. He stood and thought. Jim strapped on the canteen, and this seemed to persuade the critter. It was more in accordance with a burro's business. He heard the gurgle and smelled the water and felt the straps over his withers, a

hide-covered tin snug against his girth. It meant trailing. His foster-mother had taught him that.

Furthermore, when the man scrambled heavily to the saddle and swayed forward with both hands on the withers, he wasn't like a man, but like a pack. A pack and water, that was the ordained burden. A boot, kicked backward against his stifle, made the whole ritual perfect. It meant the long, long trail.

"Get going, you pot-bellied lizard! If the boss thinks he tricked me, I'll show him. He gives me a burro instead of a horse. All right, I'll take the burro trails."

Whether it was wise, or even possible, to head up into those rocky mesas, Jim did not know. But it was certainly the only way out. "If you break a leg, you clubfooted sheep, that's your own sweet look-out."

THE cayuse seemed to understand this point well. Since his foster-mother had been of that breed of wild mountain burros which are as sure-footed as deer and much harder to catch, she had taught him to smell chuck-holes and washouts and bad-land cracks in the dark. He plodded on.

They got up a steep bank to the divide, winding up a trail which Jim would never have risked with a real horse. And across the divide they took another trail, not one made by the Lazy B stock, but by mule-deer. "Guess I'll have the laugh on that double-crossing shorthorn Buckley after all! I'll hide in the Big Mesas until my wound's healed, then top me off a brushie somewhere. Then I'll be ready to find Chamisal."

Topping the second divide, he looked down into the gully and saw sun-shot mist kicked up by many horses. Tub Murchoree had tracked him, either by sign in the corral dust, or simply by the word of some ranch-hand who had seen Jim crawling from the main house. Or what was still more likely, Buckley himself had put the riders on the only possible trail the fugitive could have taken. At any rate they wheeled their ponies for the draw, their dust smoking in long lines. Then the mist settled. Peering through bear-brush, Jim could see them far down there, faces turned upward, scanning the mule-deer trails. Those were not trails for horses. Not a single rider tried the climb to the ridge. Slowly, frustrated, they drifted back in single file to the main house.

SPRING horse round-up cleaned out the upland grasses; and as for the wild *remudas*, Jim could not chase them because of his wound. For the first few days, as the wound healed, he had to be satisfied with that perverse critter Nick Buckley had pawned off on him.

Except for a burro trick of picking out the hardest trail instead of the easiest one, as horses will, Jim could see no redeeming quality in the little cayuse. At least he had no quality that belonged to a saddle-horse. To ride him was like riding the iron seat of a disk harrow. He would trot on rocky washes where any horse with sense would take care of his feet. When he got to a smooth wagon-track trail, he walked. When he got to sand, he stopped. And then when the rider got off, he rolled.

And a burro is supposed to have an uncanny genius for smelling out water. This whey-brained rat-tail didn't care whether there was water in the scenery or not. All he wanted was filaree. Jim found that out three days later when he packed into the Bad Lands. Behind him the flats smoked with riders who had found his trail again. Three times, Tub Murchoree and his picked riders gained on the fugitive; and three times they were stopped by a deep coulee too dangerous for a horse to cross. As long as Jim asked his cayuse to risk his legs and neck, the cayuse complied.

But he still seemed to have a perverse antipathy for water. With his canteen empty, Jim headed for a waterhole in the Grizzly Claw Wash, a crossroad of the Bad Lands where he hoped to pick up some sign of Chamisal's whereabouts. But when he led the way down through a cut toward the well-known water pocket, his horse kept twisting back, trying to sasshay off into the main bed of the gulch where the boulder wash offered shade. Although he had had no taste of water since the day before, this fool fuzztail preferred shade to a good drink!

It took only three hours of that heat to suck the moisture out of Jim's body. His flesh wound was healed over, but his bones felt light and stiff like sun-warped wood. His tongue was a prickly pear jammed into his mouth. The disaster of thirst hits with a sudden blow in the desert. In wet country a man might go for a number of days without water, but in the Coyotero Bad Lands one hour is too much.



Clodhop

A mirage of cool sparkling blue welled up in the creek wash, and Jim discovered that it was this mirage which drew the fool cayuse off the straight trail. He had never seen such imbecility even in a cow. He kicked the critter back to the trail, kept him going in slow heavy lurches. He forced him to the pocket in the side gully which was the well-known water-hole, Grizzly Wells.

And there Jim looked down at a contour map where successive evaporation periods had made lines of salt around the hole. In the bottom he found a hock-deep pool of saleratus soup.

Grizzly Wells waterhole was dry.

The skeletons of other desert wanderers who had hoped for water here littered burned grass and rattleweed. Those pilgrims might have been dead for years or for no more than a week, for buzzards cleaned away all sign of time.

Jim pulled at his big cotton-dry tongue. He tipped forward, straightened, feeling a hollowness down his back as if the jelly in his spine were baked out. It was forty miles to the next water of Chamisal's hunting grounds, an equal piece of trail back toward the Borax cow country. It did not matter much. He could not trail an hour either way. He would have to wait for sundown. Another half-hour in that baking heat would kill him. Even his horse showed signs of sunstroke. He swung off and plodded fast toward the shadowy bank across the creek wash.

It was the way a mule speeds up, Jim knew, before keeling over with heat.

Jim staggered after him, as anxious for shade as the cayuse. Halfway to the blue shade, despite the daze in his eyes, he saw that it was not shade at all, but lignite. But it looked so much like shade that it had actually fooled a horse! Of course that did not mean much, for this was only a fool horse to start with.

The little cayuse, as a matter of fact, seemed undecided which to head for—the mirage in the boulder wash, or the illusion of shade across the gully. He decided on the mirage. The blue glittering water ebbed as the horse approached, his hoofs turning outward, which gave him that ugliest of gaits called “padding.” He shuffled up a fine cloud of steam in the silt, but kept going, chasing the blue mirage.

Jim sank under a sajuaro clump, thinking the forked shade would help. He lay there, frying in alternate strips of sun and shade which were like a gridiron.

The cayuse had stopped blowing, his dried belly heaving and rattling, his mouth and throat “cribbing” for wind. He sagged to his knees. He was either dying or starting to roll. The preliminary movement is the same for both. Possibly he thought to quench his thirst by rolling in silt, as a thirst-maddened man will tear off his clothes, hoping the air will cool his burned body.

Jim did not watch any more. His head sank forward, cudgeled down to the earth by the sun. And as he lay there, he heard a pawing of hoofs digging in the sand, and it sounded as if the devil-horse were digging a grave for his rider.

IT would be many hours to sundown. Time dragged as Jim's eyes searched vainly for strips of shade along the cliffs. There were none. His head, pillowed on a sand dune, lolled sideways, and he tried to focus on that dark squat misshapen figure—the horse, pawing and digging. He could hear more than he could see.

He could hear a strange heavenly sound, faint above the throbbing beat and thump of his ears.

The horse had dug down, not far, actually not more than the depth of his hocks, as a horse will scrape away snow, smelling the grass beneath. Cows will not do that, but horses will. Horses will not dig deep, but burros will.

The “burro” smelled, not grass, but something more precious right where that mirage had varnished a bright blue coat

over the silver of salt and the gray of mica.

The sound that came to Jim from the heat-waves which were the borderland between heaven and hell was the prolonged melody of the little cayuse drinking water.

CHAPTER VII

CLIFFS stained with the red of iron caught the sudden onslaught of a hot sunrise. For the sake of his little horse, pinch-flanked and heat-weary, Jim had made Indian camp at the newly found pocket for one night. That good horse deserved the reward of rest.

Jim felt the bond between them growing. First he had been saved by a crooked outcast of a man, Dun Chamisal. Next he was saved by a crookedy little horse. They were renegades together, all three of them—Dun and the runt horse and Jim. . . .

Following a prospector's schedule of trailing in the early morning and the cool of evening, Jim cinched up. He climbed through horse-high boulders to the jutting cliffs, then zigzagged up a steep cut to the mesa rim.

He looked back, mildly concerned about his pursuers. At last sight of them, he had noticed the dust-cloud thinning into a long line, as rider after rider lagged. Because of detours around the deep gashes in the desert's breast, they had covered thrice Jim's distance, thanks to the little cayuse. They must be out of water, hoping to replenish their packs at the Grizzly Claw pocket. That was the trick the desert will play on mortals: a promise of water, so that the hapless victims use up their store, trusting to the waterhole to save their lives. The posse by now would be a straggling line of jiggered horses and thirst-tortured men.

Jim was not at all surprised to see only one rider heading down into Grizzly Claw gulch. Tub Murchoree was the only one who had stuck to the trail. And even he had to walk his spent horse. Jim was certain Tub's water-pack was dry. Tub, of course, knew where to find Grizzly Claw hole, and he banked on it. Not only by this inference, but by Tub's actions, Jim knew he had been without water for a long time. The horse limped to the dry bowl in the rocks, hung its head, nosed the white soup. From his perch on the gulch rim Jim could see the whole stark drama.

He saw Tub sink to his knees, claw at his lips, and look up into the sky, perhaps praying, perhaps watching a buzzard.

Tub could not see Jim, even though he looked up facing him, for Jim hid behind a roan rock that was speckled with quartz. Nor did he see the cayuse, for the latter had been taught something of the advantage of protective coloring by his jackass nurse. He stood as wild burros stand, motionless and apparently asleep against the shale and snuff-brown strata, preferring that to the strata of glittering quartz. This whiskered crowbait avoided the quartz, perhaps because of the reflected heat, but the result was the same. He was as hard to spot as a chuckawalla.

Jim said softly to Tub—half a mile away and seven hundred feet down:

"Too bad, Tub. But here's where you sit out of the game. I'm not afraid of your posse, but you stick to an idea like a fly to a saddle-gall. I'm innocent, so why should I let you catch me and hang me? If I told you there's water a few good horse-jumps below you, you'd fill your ten-gallon belly and start chasing me. Oh, no!"

Tub had torn off his hickory shirt and rolled to his back. His stomach was whitish, compared to his red face—like the under side of a lizard.

"With you out of the way, Tub, I'll be free to hunt Chamisal and go after the man who stole my pouch. I'll clear myself without you camping on my trail."

Jim rubbed his own lips, unscrewed the canteen and drank, for the sight down there gave him a terrible thirst.

He saw the whiskered lips of his cayuse reaching. He gave him a drink, wondering if the beast had the same sympathy for that thirsty bronc' down there as Jim had for Tub. Probably not; this little cayuse woke up only long enough to stick his whiskery jaw into a hatful of water.

"If I was as bored with humans as you, you knob-kneed wall-eye, I wouldn't do what I'm going to do. You're the wise one in this outfit. I'm the consarned jackass! But old Tub and his horse simply must have a drink."

TUB MURCHOREE propped himself up, light sparkling in the burning dots of his eyes. He reached for the hide-covered canteen that had been thrown at him, and drank. He drank and spilled the water on his bare chest. He drank until he settled back on his huge hams, like a water-logged tree-bole.

Jim said quietly: "Give me your gun, Tub."

Tub Murchoree saw all the glare of the porphyry boulders concentrated on a tiny circle of blinding light—Jim's gun-bore.

He answered, groggy and drunk: "Thanks, Jim." His eyes focused on the hypnotic blaze of the bore. "Sure, here's my iron. Take it with my compliments." He drank again. "Pretty smart bit of trailing, Jim, your hanging onto a full canteen. Thanks!"

"I didn't hang onto it. There's plenty more. My horse smelled a pocket of it."

"Your what?" The Sheriff's eyes, purblind, went up from the sickle hocks of the cayuse to the angled stifles and goose rump. "Did you say it was a horse?"

"He's a better horse than yours. Look at your crowbar. A sound horse only shifts his hind feet. Yours is shifting his front ones too. Mine isn't moving either front or back."

JIM took the canteen from Tub, filled his hat and watered the stricken pony. "And besides all that," he said, "my little cayuse savvies more about judging a human than all of you pot-bellied galoots together."

"Yes, but—" The Sheriff wiped the sweat that had begun to ooze out of him, dripping into his eyes. "But it don't look like a horse to me. It's a sheep." He squinted, sitting there stupefied at his miraculous deliverance from the fires of hell. "I'll be hornswoggled for a row of tombstones!" he gasped. "It's Nick Buckley's pack-horse! No wonder you kept giving us the slip at those cross-gulches back yonder. Buckley'll sure work you over, for rustling that horse!"

"You got it all wrong, Tub. And I had it all wrong until this little bronc' opened my eyes. I hated every man that ever drew a breath until the little cayuse showed me I was wrong. I thought Nick Buckley had double-crossed me, but like you say, he gave me his best horse. He believed what I told him. Even Dun Chamisal wouldn't believe me when I said I was innocent. The boss of the Lazy B was the first one. It means others will believe. Maybe even you!"

"Don't seem like it makes much difference if I believe you or not," Tub said. "All you got to do is to tie me up, then line out across the border. Only first, where can I get another drink?"

"Get up and walk. The pocket's in the wash down yonder."

Tub Murchoree lumbered to his heavy wabbling feet. He was so drunk from the water that he forgot his vest and shirt. He rolled in his gait. Sweat oozed from his nude torso, so that he shone. His face was the color of lava not yet cooled. Jim walked almost at his side, but out of arm's-reach, leading both horses. Tub's horse obviously was done for, for he gave both symptoms of stroke—the trembling legs as well as the cessation of sweating. Jim doused his nose with a wet bandana.

"Just what did you want to arrest me for, Tub?"

Tub stared, dumfounded. "You busted jail and killed a man."

"I didn't bust jail. You yourself said I wasn't a prisoner. And it was Dun Chamisal knifed that deputy. How could I knife him when I didn't have a key to get out of my cell? It was Dun who got the key from the man he'd knifed."

"Maybe that would be a good defense in your trial."

"Trial, hell! Everyone wants me to swing, and they're using that jail break as an excuse to make it legal."

Tub's answer closed the subject. "I aint arrested you yet, have I?"

They reached the hole in the boulder wash, and Tub flopped to his stomach.

Jim asked slowly, "Mary Divens left town yet, Tub?"

Tub lifted his dripping face. "She's still in town, with Lam Blandon sparking her a-plenty."

Jim was silent.

"You see Lam Blandon wins everything: the girl, the quarter-section his brothers left him. . . . Daggone, I'm getting sick."

Jim was still silent.

"I ought to know better, drinking more'n my horse. But cold water for heat-stroke, hot-water bottles for heat exhaustion. Maybe mine's not stroke. Maybe I need hot-water bottles. I made a mistake somewheres. Sick as a pup."

TO give Tub a little shade, Jim shoved his horse closer. It was his own cayuse he used for the purpose, knowing he would stand in one spot indefinitely.

"Don't look so hard at me, Jim. Put your gun in your leather. I won't give you any trouble. I couldn't move if you burned mesquite brush under my tail."

Jim spun the revolver a moment, thinking. "You say Lam Blandon's still in town?"

"Sure. Waitin' to probate the will."

Jim's face was murderous. "Reckon I'll have to leave you, Tub. And I got to take your horse, so you can't bother me any more."

"Listen, Jim. You got my gun. Don't take my horse. These Yaquis are all around us. I smelled dust in a cañon back yonder. They stick to the pebble washes where they won't leave tracks, but they're everywhere—" He checked himself, seeing the eager flame in Jim's eyes.

"That's the best news I've heard for quite a spell, Tub. If I can find some of Chamisal's men, I'll get proof that I was framed in that raid. And I know who it was who framed me."

"Not that it matters in this lay-out. But who?"

"Lam Blandon."

CHAPTER VIII

"LET'S see you reach, *hombre*," a voice called from behind a boulder.

Jim whirled, drawing. White light crashed across the rim of the boulder, and he fell.

As he lay on his back, he thought his skull had turned into a bell clanging. The lead had hit his hat-band, but the impact felt perpetual, ringing over and over again. He must have been lying there for some moments, for he saw the boots of men, then leather chaps, then salt-smeared faces. They were three of Tub Murchoree's riders. . . .

Jim's eyes searched out the largest blot of shadow, Tub Murchoree's vast torso. He grunted, "Pretty slick bit of cold-decking, Tub, considering."

Tub stood puffing hard, holding two guns in his hands—his own and Jim's. He said apologetically: "We'll take him to Borax, men."

"What in tunket are you talking about?" one of the dark forms shouted. "We're hanging him right now."

"You think so?" Tub said. "Give me that rope. He's my prisoner, not yours."

"No time for any foolishness, Tub. There's Yaquis everywhere. Besides, he aint your prisoner. You was his."

Tub knocked the deputy on the chin. It was a pretty good blow for a man with such a water-logged stomach. The deputy staggered back, and Tub kicked the gun out of his hand.

"This prisoner gets a fair trial if I have to shoot you three pirutes to cinch it."

Another deputy swore. "We're telling you, Tub, Chamisal is on the ride. We captured one of his bucks, who'd been thrown from his horse over a chuck-hole. He told us Chamisal's gone loco mad on account his son was killed in that jail break. He's killing every white man he meets in the desert, whether they got gold-dust or not."

Another one said: "That's how come we crawled down here without you seeing us. We kept under cover. Chamisal's bunch cut down on Bob Nevers and Beefy Simpson, who were back-trailing home."

The deputy who had been hit rubbed his jaw; then as if he had thought it over, sagged at his knees and fell face forward. His face was in the waterhole. The other two deputies followed suit.

Tub's eyes roved with a drunken glare, scanning the cliffs, hunting sign. He sniffed for dust. "They're around somewhere," he said. "Where did you jaspers leave your horses?"

The first one to finish drinking answered: "Red's fell with heat-stroke. Sondergarde's paint busted a leg. I let my piebald go when I saw some sage stiffening back in place after a band of riders had trampled it. They couldn't of walked their horses by there ten minutes before. I hid betwixt two rocks, and then crawled to a wash and joined Sondergarde and Red Castine."

"And now, Tub," the deputy Sondergarde said, "maybe you can see why we got to finish this hellbender here without any more palaverin'."

Tub took out a pair of steel cuffs and said quietly: "I've told you popguns what I'm doing with him. If there's any objections, I'll put a gun in his hand and let him shoot it out with you."

He knelt down beside Jim and lifted his listless arm. "One cuff on your wrist, Jim, the other on mine. Satisfied?"

SOME twenty minutes later the Sheriff, his prisoner, Sondergarde, Red Castine and the third deputy, white-haired Texas Silver, all peered over the ring of boulders that surrounded the waterhole, and saw the Yaquis up there on the cliff-rim.

The Sheriff saw the man at his side staring with burning eyes. The man Jim had come into the desert to meet was up there!

"Don't think you can do any palaverin' on *this* raid!" Tub said, reading Jim's mind. "Set on this rock, and if you so

much as wiggle your hand, I'll change my play."

Jim kept his eyes on the thick, squat figure of Chamisal, distinguishable even at that distance. "Looks like another massacre, don't it, Tub?"

The five trapped men stared across the wavering heat-rims of their rocks. Jim knew that a palaver with that blood-thirsty chief up yonder was out of the question now. "Listen, Tub," he said. "I got to change my play too. I came here hoping to find Chamisal and get proof that Lam Blandon stole my pouch and framed me. That's all off. We're going to be rubbed out, every man of us. Give me a gun to help fight, Tub. Five of us is none too many. There's ten breeds on that cliff yonder—"

"And a dozen on the other cliff," Tub said. "And there's four of us—not five."

With the appearance of this second bunch of Yaquis on the other side of the gulch, the besieged men crouched low, their eyes darting from cliff to cliff. "How you like this jackpot, Tub?" Red Castine asked grimly.

"Not so bad."

They all looked at him. Tub was certainly a sick man, sick up there in his bullet-shaped head. Not so bad, indeed! Here were five men and two horses huddled together in a bowl of rocks the size of a barn floor. One of the horses—the Sheriff's—had already keeled over. Only four of the men could fight, and one of these had to watch a prisoner. And worst of all, the prisoner, they all firmly believed, was in cahoots with the raiders.

Tub studied the lay-out. "Cover up the wet spots in the sand, Sondergarde. Maybe it only looks like basalt from where those rattlers are watching. But we got to be plumb cautious."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Tub; but if it's cautious, I'll sure do it, and no questions."

"Red, you stretch out, like the heat's got you. Me and the prisoner look that way already. Half an hour from now, you do the same thing, Texas. That's about all the time it takes for a man to kick off when he finds a waterhole dry."

"**W**HAT'S the idea playing games?" Red Castine asked. "They'll come down long before half an hour."

"Not Chamisal. He's waiting up there on the cliffs, same as that buzzard up yonder. He thinks we got no water."

"He knows about this waterhole," Sondergarde objected. "Everybody that's

prospected this range knows Grizzly Wells."

"This aint Grizzly Wells. The regular hole's up there in that cut-back wash. And it's dry. And Chamisal knows it. He thinks we all just got here, banking on finding water. That's why he let us get this far without sniping us."

JIM began to see the Sheriff's game. But old Texas Silver said: "How come he don't know about this hole right here?"

"Because it's a brand-new one. The way I estimate, the old hole up yonder drained through a fissure maybe from an earthquake, and this is where it seeped."

"Not so bad!" Jim thought. The Sheriff was pretty crafty. He was letting Chamisal think the trapped men were out of water, which had its natural conclusion: Five white men crowded in that oven of boulders would dry up in the heat long before sundown. If they were not actually dead, they would be unable to pull a trigger. That old devil Indian up on the cliffs was getting a satisfying revenge for his son's death.

"Fall over that rock, Texas, so you're facing the draw yonder. Some of 'em will trail down through there, when they come."

"When they come, Tub," Jim Harvey pleaded, "I'll account for a good cut of 'em—if you'll lend me a gun for just two minutes."

"You mean you'll go join up with 'em, that's what you'll do," Tub snorted.

Sondergarde, whose tall lanky frame stretched across the entire width of the sand floor, spoke up: "You're putting a hobble on yourself, Tub, chained to that fellow with your left hand."

"I never saw ary man in the whole West could really shoot two guns," the Sheriff said.

"Strikes me it'd be a heap easier if you just handcuffed him, both hands, and roped him," Texas Silver suggested.

Tub chewed on this. The arrival of Chamisal had certainly changed his original plan.

Before he made any decision, Jim burst out: "Think I'd want to dicker with those bloodthirsty killers, Tub? There's no newborn babe here to save, nor womenfolk, like last time. And I've got no pouch to show 'em. You'll need me, Tub, when they come!"

"Don't listen to him, Tub."

Jim begged frantically: "They'll come from every side of us, Tub. Unlock



He found a hock-deep pool of saleratus soup—Grizzly Wells waterhole was dry.

these cuffs! Let me fight! Give me this one chance!"

Red Castine turned around from his rock, his freckled, boyish face drawn and old. "Make that long-winded coyote shut up, Tub. He's driving me crazy!"

"*Bueno*. Crazy is what I want you to look like, crazy from the heat." Tub twisted to the man at his shoulder. "I'll give you one shot, Jim. If you use it to salt Chamisal, it'll prove you're on our side."

The men turned slowly to see the effect of this. Jim gulped. "I'll top off every Yaqui inside my range, Tub, but—"

"Uh-huh. But what?"

"What'd I tell you?" Sondergarde gave a clack of a laugh from the ground. "He won't hurt that sidewindin' snake up there who thinks he's watching us burning up!"

"He's a sidewinder," Jim admitted, "and I hope to God you get him. But I can't do it. His son got beefed saving my life!"

They all gave low husky hoots. But Tub Murchoree took a different view. "There's lots of things this hoppergrass has done and said which looks pretty much according to Hoyle. Nick Buckley took a long bet on him, and gave him his best horse. We need five men, and

this terrapin can shoot better than any one of us." He cast off the cuffs, and gave Jim not a six-gun but a rifle. A rifle would be useless in a close hand-to-hand scrap, should that play occur to the prisoner. "You try running away now, Jim, and we'll all four of us get you where your suspenders cross."

THE manner in which Tub put the rifle-butt in Jim's hand, placing the barrel just so across the boulder, looked from a distance as if he were helping a blind man. To Chamisal and his Yaquis, the scene was approaching the hoped-for climax.

The little cayuse, purely because he was born with a pinch-flanked, stove-up look, put the final touch on this picture of thirst and agony. For a very good reason,—because he was sweating now, and the sun had started burning on his wet back,—the cayuse thought it was time to roll. He went down, sinking to his knees, heavily, crumpling.

Jim turned to his horse, but Tub caught his arm. "Now what?"

"I want to keep that cayuse on the ground, Tub, so he won't get hit."

"You stay in your own chute, son. I told you what you'd get if you swing that rifle from where it's pointing."

"That little cayuse saved your life, Tub, and mine too. Tell some one to sit on his head."

Tub's big wet face shone with a new inspiration. "Hey, Jo!" he called to Sondergarde. "Sit on that bronc's head. Make him lie thataway. When they see another horse keeled over, they'll know we're all completely dried up."

"Rub sand on him," Jim added enthusiastically. "Sand's mother's milk to that zebra."

The horse's whiskered lips curled back, grinning with pleasure as Sondergarde scoured his knobby forehead with handfuls of mica. The cayuse didn't roll. He just lay there like a lizard when you tickle its belly with a straw. He lay there complacent and half dead. Not that he was acting. He had no supernatural savvy about the important rôle he was playing. He was just being himself.

The Sheriff fell across his own rock, his eyes squinting down his long wet nose so that he could see what was coming.

Jim Harvey took his cue from the others, clawed desperately at his throat, fell forward.

The terrific light smashing back from great planes of quartz, lit the group of prostrate men. It looked as if all five were lying with their feet against a dead horse, their faces turned in every direction, with the pitiful hope of fighting when the attack came.

Chamisal held off for another half-hour, delighted, then led his men down the cuts and draws and washouts.

There were twenty.

CHAPTER IX

ONE of Tub Murchoree's deputies rode into Borax, telling an incoherent and harrowing story of stove-up horses, of thirst-tortured men, of the posse straggling, picked off by snipe shots as they tried to back-trail home; and finally of Murchoree sticking doggedly to the trail.

Borax seethed madly. Riders came in from the cow outfits. Corrals in town boiled with steaming dust as men topped off bronc's, saddled up, whirled out into the main street.

The tall, burned young boss of the Lazy B rode into town, racked his big horse at the rail outside the Commercial Hotel, then went into the long narrow lobby and bought a can of cigars.

"Riding with the relief party, Nick?" the old desk clerk asked.

"Thought it was a lynch party this time."

"Sure it's a lynch party. You didn't figure they'd bring that hellbender back alive when he's got all the Yaquis in the desert helping him? Any man sees him, will shoot him on sight."

Nick Buckley said, opening the cigar can: "Who's leading this rabble?"

"The horse-doctor and the land-agent and the Casino Boss. But Lam Blandon's really the leading spirit."

Nick Buckley nodded thoughtfully. "Reckon that's to be expected, being it was his kin that were rubbed out in that raid." He turned, and found himself looking down at the face of a girl.

THE heat of the narrow lobby had brightened her light tan; heat dazed her big eyes—or else it was a covert tragedy lurking in them.

"You remember me, Mr. Buckley?" she said.

Of course he remembered her. He answered: "I was at the inquest."

"I heard that Jim Harvey got away after the jail break, when the posse almost caught him at your ranch."

Buckley nodded, biting a cigar tip.

"Some of your ranch-hands said a horse of yours was missing the next morning. A very valuable horse. Jim Harvey must have rustled it."

"My ranch-hands are given to talking spells."

"They said it was funny you didn't join the posse to go after Jim, especially when he took your best horse."

"What's the use of going after a man you can't catch?"

Her blue gaze fixed on his weather-beaten face. "Did you give him that horse?"

He lit his cigar: "Yes, ma'am."

She looked hard, the light beginning to burn in her tired eyes. "I'm glad Jim Harvey had one friend."

"I wasn't a friend. I was just taking a long shot at the wheel, the one with the highest odds against winning." He puffed, then said carefully: "The kid might have been innocent."

She sank to a chair, her hands kneading each other. "If there was a single chance—" she said tragically, but then burst out: "There wasn't a chance. I saw it all. I'm not blind! I can believe my eyes! My sister saw it! And she told just what she saw!"

THREE WERE RENEGADES

"Then don't have any regrets," Buckley said. But his voice was hard.

"I do regret! Since he got away, I've been hoping desperately he wouldn't get caught. I didn't feel that way right after the raid. It was too shocking, seeing a strong man like that turn coward. And there was my sister and the little baby. He'd left them helpless. I hated him. I was blind with rage. But if there's one chance in a thousand—"

"Being blind don't help when a town's all het up to lynch a man," Buckley said, puffing harder.

She looked out at the churning bunch of riders in the street. There were half a hundred in that posse.

"I don't want them to get Jim Harvey," she cried almost hysterically, "even if he's guilty. He couldn't help being a coward. A man's born that way. You have to pity him. If they lynch him, I'm the one to blame."

"You didn't say much at the inquest, as I recollect."

"But my sister did. Every word she said could hang him, and I just sat there and listened. I wish I'd lied! You said there's one chance we might all be wrong. You've got to help me save him, Mr. Buckley! You've got to!"

He studied her, as if sizing up a doubtful hand. "What's your first play?"

"I'm going to ride out there into the desert."

He held the smoke in his mouth. "Alone!" he said then.

"Lam Bandon's going with me."

"You mean to save Harvey!"

"He's going because he's afraid Jim Harvey will get away. He wants to see him brought back for trial, and that's what I want!"

"Bandon seems pretty brave, it strikes me, riding out there in the desert with a girl—and Chamisal on the loose."

"There'll be a posse of fifty men following us. Only I want to get there first."

SHE reminded Nick of his wife. He remembered how Luella had fought for him against a whole range because she believed—and without a single proof—that he was innocent of the killings they'd charged against him. This Divens girl now was in love with her renegade, coward or not, that was plain enough. Buckley had heard a lot about her since she came to Borax. Everyone talked about the two women and the tiny baby who had survived that massacre. This

girl had never had a home, and she wanted one. Her father had worked for the Blandons. Her lot was that mixture of poor relation and hired girl. She wanted a home of her own. But then, with her man picked out, her home and her dreams had been shattered to bits.

Buckley turned to the old desk clerk. "What's the last news about the trail Harvey took?"

"Aint heard that. But Tub Murchoree was heading for Grizzly Wells when the last of them saw him. There was only three of his deputies left, and they were trailing from way back—Red Castine, Sondergarde and Texas Silver."

Nick Buckley said to the girl, "You go get your friend, Bandon. I'll saddle up six good horses, two for each of us. We'll get to Grizzly Wells ahead of that sheepherdin' rabble out yonder."

CHAPTER X

JIM reached for the canteen under his boulder and soaked his dried-up tissues. Sheriff Murchoree pressed his nude torso on the hot rock like a big Gila monster sunning itself. He looked shapeless and dead and dried. Red Castine and Texas Silver, sipping steadily at water, fought off the stewing heat of shale and quartz and granite. Sondergarde stretched face upward, his long body covering the hole in the ground, one hand holding the head of the little cayuse in the sand.

Even the buzzard was fooled, for it wheeled lower. And two more of its carrion-hungry kind saw this simulation of certain death from the top of the brass sky.

Chamisal and his twenty bucks, drunk with Jimson weed, could hardly be expected to see with the miraculous clarity of those birds of prey. They saw, and enjoyed the sight of mortals in the last throes of the cruellest death. They came walking upright, triumphant and malignant, like boys who would rather keep their cake another moment instead of eating it.

Chamisal had seen that brass-knobbed star which Tub had left on his vest at the dry waterhole. He knew it belonged to Tub, and he knew Tub. It was a symbol as eloquent to him as the mink-skin pouch his son had given to a white man. That brass star was the bad medicine of white man's law, which had caused the death of his son. He wanted the first

shot at that great hulk which was the Sheriff's body.

Chamisal chuckled, stepped ahead of his men with a shambling trudge. Under his floppy hat, his face shone red as shale and as expressionless, except for the burn of his gummy eyes. His hair, coarse and black as a horse's mane, was gathered in a bunch behind his skull, braided to a short queue with wampum. He wore arm-bands of snakeskin and metal jinglers over his shoulders that were for lulling enemies to sleep.

He slouched up to within twenty yards of his feast. His men, seeing his gesture that they hold their fire, strung out in a ring about the nest of rocks. They also stood. For they saw what was clear enough: the besieged white men were dead—or else too near dead even to lift their guns.

"All right, men," Tub said casually, and without moving his mouth. . . . He gave Chamisal a steel-capped Army bullet in the chest, and the same dose to the two squat breeds on either side of him.

Jim Harvey snuggled the rifle-butt comfortably against his cheek, dropped four, opened his breech, blew the smoke out of the barrel. Then he leaped over his rock and ran to the fallen chief.

Texas and Red Castine each got a man in the left breast, then in the backs of two more as they turned to dive for cover. There was no cover, for Jim Harvey was out there, blazing with a forty-five he had picked up from the first dead Indian.

Sondergarde took care of the file of bucks running up into the nearest draw. He squeezed easily and regularly, like a man in a shooting-gallery picking off clay pigeons. A few flabbergasted ones threw a shot or two into the rock nest, but ran as they fired, stampeding for the cliffs and their horses. They left Jim standing there alone over the crumpled form of Chamisal.

WITH the clearing smoke, the echoes of the fusillade dwindled to a thrum of fleeing hoofs. Red Castine doctored a crease in his shoulder. Texas Silver found out, when it was all over, that he had a sliced ear and a cut across his jaw. Sondergarde was creased so slightly that he dabbed the singed skin with a wet bandana, like a cantina girl making up. All their wounds were from the shoulders up, for with the exception of Jim, Tub's gang had fired while lying down behind protecting granite.

Beyond the nest of rocks the wash was strewn with bodies. Inside, the ground was strewn with ejected shells, powder stained and dulled with molten wax.

"Did you see that hellion fight?" Sondergarde said, when he finished primping.

They knew he was talking about Jim. "He salted twenty men if he salted one," said Red Castine.

"Heck, there weren't any more'n twenty to start with," Texas Silver objected, "and I killed six."

Castine said: "If I didn't get the whole bunch on my side of the lay-out, I'll eat your saddle-bags."

"It was Jim Harvey got the highest score," Tub Murchoree said, "and you all know it. Maybe you'll agree now that he goes back to Borax for trial."

"Goes back?" Sondergarde said bewildered. "How you going to take him back when you haven't even got him prisoner?"

The men all stared dumfounded at each other. The point had not occurred to any one of them until the fight was over.

"You coots finish doctoring yourselves," Tub said calmly. "I know where he is. He dragged Chamisal behind that boulder yonder, where there's shade. I'll take a *pasear* over there soon as I get my shirt and my star."

THE three wounded men saw him go off toward the slash in the cliff where the old waterhole was. Then he disappeared in the jumble of horse-high rocks where they had last seen Jim fighting in the open. Without excitement they discussed going over there to see what was keeping the Sheriff so long—when three riders crowded their ponies down a steep cut and jogged across the wash, winding among boulders and dead Indians.

Red Castine, Sondergarde and Texas Silver looked up wearily. They saw the tall ridge-pole body of Nick Buckley on an *Apelusa*. A small figure loomed in the dust with a third, still smaller, which seemed to be a boy.

"It's a girl!"

"And it's the Lazy B cow boss."

"And that mail-order cowboy, Lam Blandon."

The three rode up to the waterhole, exhausted—and bewildered.

Nick Buckley observed, nodding to the strewn bodies: "Got a lot of good Indians in this wash, seems like."

Mary Divens asked in the same breath: "Where's Jim Harvey?"

"Fall off, folks, and cool your saddles," said Sondergarde. "We'll tell you everything."

"But did you catch Harvey?" Lam Blandon asked.

"Fixing to shoot him?" Castine answered.

"What do you think we rode all this way for?"

CASTINE looked at Sondergarde, and the latter looked at Texas Silver. Sondergarde answered noncommittally: "Tub's got him safe. We're waiting for 'em. So why don't you fall off and ask some sensible questions?"

Buckley was the only one to dismount. He ran to the side of his little cayuse, and while Sondergarde told about the fight, Buckley rumbled the bronc's ear, grabbed his whiskered nose and shook the big head as if he were a pup. The cayuse showed no special reaction, except to blow a little, as if he smelled corn. "Looks like Jim Harvey took care of you, old Clodhop!" Buckley laughed.

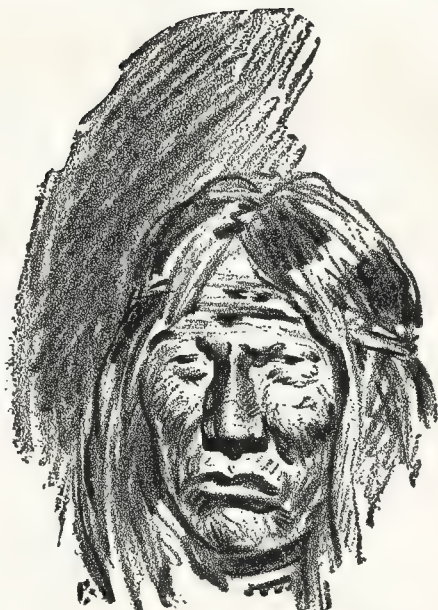
Lam Blandon and the girl sat their horses, gazing tensely around the gulch bed. It was Blandon who first saw Sheriff Murchoree trudging from behind a boulder. Blandon had already reached for his rifle scabbard, and now he had the rifle ready in his hand—weighing it, waiting.

Mary Divens shoved her horse up to his, side and side, and reached for the gun. She clung to it with both hands, and kept clinging even when he yanked her from the saddle. Nick Buckley walked over and stopped the tussle.

"Better stack up this game careful, Blandon," Nick said, "before you elect to sit in." He yanked the rifle free.

Blandon glared, choking an oath. "What'n hell blazes you mean, Buckley! We're here to kill that rattler, you and me both! That's what you told me yourself."

Sondergarde spoke up. "Listen, Mr. Blandon: Maybe Jim Harvey turned your brothers over to Chamisal for mas-sacreing. But the Sheriff's got his doubts. So have we all. Whatever you say about Harvey, he aint yellow. He jumped out and fought them Indians while the rest of us was lying down behind rocks. He slammed at 'em close-up, when five of 'em were trying to drag their chief to a horse. And he knew we were shooting at him from behind too. Only none of



"You sagebrush Chamisal! You heap big liar!"

us really aimed at him, being there was too many Yaquis to be picked off first."

Mary Divens leaped to her horse.

She got to the heap of great boulders as Tub Murchoree was trudging heavily down to the sand wash.

"Have you got him?" she gasped.

Tub thrust a thumb over his shoulder. She dropped from her horse and hurried around the boulder, where she saw Jim standing before the stiff shapeless figure of the outlaw Yaqui.

Chamisal was gray-faced and silent as if carved out of that same rock against which his back was propped. Both men were silent, although Jim leaned as he stood, momentarily congealed in the act of reaching for the outlaw's throat.

"Jim!"

HE turned as the girl ran to him and gripped his arm. For a moment both of them forgot the mortally wounded Indian sitting there as stiff and inhuman as a scarecrow.

"I don't get this," Jim said, baffled, "you coming here into the desert."

"There's a lynch posse coming, Jim. A good fifty riders. I wanted to get here first."

He studied her. "What's that to you?"

"I'm banking on one chance, Jim—that you're innocent."

"You've got no proof. The only man who can prove it is here. And he won't talk."

"I don't want proof, Jim. I don't even want proof against my own eyes—against everything I saw, and my sister saw."

The Sheriff had followed Mary Divens. And there were other forms in the red glow of sunset. Lam Blandon and the Boss of the Lazy B, Red Castine and Sondergarde and Texas Silver had come over from the waterhole to see this picture—the girl clinging to the fugitive's arm, the Indian sitting there, staring with snake eyes at the slim ragged man in front of him.

Jim freed himself from the girl, thrusting her behind him. He looked down at Chamisal.

"Your time's come, *hombre*," Jim said. "I'm not asking you to confess your rides. We all know you won't do that. I'm just asking you to tell the Sheriff here: did I dicker with you before that raid when you rubbed out the Blandon party?"

Chamisal's mouth, mottled like a tarantula's belly, jammed shut.

"Some one told you about the lay-out—the guns we had, the water. You wait before attacking if your victims are thirsty. You've shown us that. But you attacked the Blandons. Some one tipped you off how many fighting men there were—what guns they had, and how much water. Was I the man?"

CHAMISAL'S rheumy eyes stared into the sunset as they had stared many times searching for lone nesters and pocket-hunters to rob and kill. He stared far beyond the circle of people behind this stringy dark form in front of him. They did not exist. His questioner did not exist. For a brief flash, perhaps, his eyes lit on the Sheriff's star which he hated above all symbols in his savage faith. He said nothing.

Jim Harvey said: "Your son gave up his life to get me out of jail, Chamisal. They're going to hang me—so your son's dying was for no good. If you talk, I won't be hanged. Dun Chamisal didn't die for nothing—if you talk."

The last simmer of heat reddened the death-glare in the Yaqui's eyes. He said huskily:

"You sagebrush Chamisal! You heap big liar!"

Eagerly Jim jumped at these words. The dying man had talked. If he would speak one word more!

"All right, Chamisal. Then some one else is Dun's friend—some one who got you to raid the Blandons. You know who he is, because he showed you that medicine-bag that's saved your father and your ancestors. That's why you

wouldn't believe me when I went up to palaver with you during the raid. I didn't have the bag. If I'm not your son's friend, then who is?"

The fast-dimming eyes roved crazily, passing each face in that silent ring—the face of Red Castine, of Sondergarde, the bandaged white head of Texas Silver, the thin tanned face of the girl, the blubber face of the man with the star, the grim bony face of Nick Buckley. His gaze stopped and held on Lam Blandon.

EVERYONE saw that look, the eyes fixed dim and pale like a lizard's watching a roadrunner. Lam Blandon was wise enough not to speak, for it would merely label that look as an eloquent accusation. Chamisal, after all, had said nothing, confessed nothing. But Blandon's eyes shifted, covertly glancing to the horses out in the wash.

They were all silent. The desert itself was silent, except for a slight suck of hot wind from the rock coulees, and for the death-rattle in Chamisal's throat.

Out of the corner of his mouth, Tub said to Red Castine: "Watch Buckley's horses." He said aloud to the rest: "Well, Chamisal gets to be a good Indian at last, folks. Let's get back and irrigate our throats some more."

He was so casual that not a single member of the party had an inkling of what was happening. Lam Blandon, watching every face for a sign, followed the group. There was no chance of jumping to a horse, for one of the deputies—the red-haired one—had taken the cavvy to a side draw and stood at the draw's mouth, obviously on guard. He might be guarding the precious horses against a possibility of the prisoner, Jim Harvey, making a break. Lam Blandon hoped this, swallowing hard, and darting frenzied glances at the Sheriff, at his deputies, at Buckley, at the prisoner, and even at the girl.

The men were busy about the fire, making sourdough biscuits, slicing bacon, sticking it on mesquite twigs, frying it.

Nick Buckley was feeding corn to his knob-kneed runt of a cayuse.

Jim Harvey stood revealed in the fire-light, staring at the girl. She stared at him. She had seen the proof, but as she had said, she needed none. Her eyes clung to Jim's; her hand groped uncertainly, until he took it. She whispered: "It was Lam Blandon."

Jim scarcely nodded. He knew that he had her back again. He was building

THREE WERE RENEGADES

his dreams of a ranch of their own, with this girl living in a little shack, working with him, believing him, fighting for him as the mistress of the Lazy B stuck to Nick Buckley and worked with him and fought for him. If Lam Blandon were hanged, the quarter-section and its water that made the whole cañon good cow-country would go to Mary Divens and her sister. But that counted nothing with Jim. It was the girl who was the winnings.

She kept on: "Lam Blandon wanted to wipe his brothers out so he could get their land. And he did it. What my sister heard from that dying Indian was the truth. One of our own men had dickered with Chamisal to raid us and kill us all!"

Lam Blandon had stood by the fire a moment; then he drifted toward that horse cavy.

Tub rolled a cigarette and said casually: "Taking a *pasear* somewheres, Mr. Blandon?"

Blandon stiffened. He gasped queerly: "No, I was just—just going to snake some firewood."

"Better not get near those horses. Red Castine won't like it."

Blandon turned, his lips gray and shaky. He saw Tub calmly taking out a pair of cuffs.

"Coffee's in the pot, Mr. Blandon. Better sit down here next to me. How about it, Cook?" he said to Texas Silver.

Texas Silver, acting cook, said: "It's all right with me."

Lam Blandon saw guns pointing at him from the cook, from Sondergarde, from the Sheriff. He sat down by the latter, and heard the clink of handcuffs, and felt the body-warm steel close about his wrist.

Two men searched him. . . . Then Tub held up a moth-eaten pouch of mink-skin. "You'd have played safer if you'd burnt this, *hombre*. But I see your point: You needed it, coming into the desert thisaway, lest you cross trails with some bronco Indians."

AS if to change the subject, Jim Harvey went to the other side of the waterhole—the spring which the outcast little cayuse had brought to life and to the rescue of dying men.

Nick Buckley was there, hugging the atrociously thick neck of his sleepy horse. He saw Jim and the girl watching him. He took out a half-empty can of cigars

from a saddle-bag and handed it to Jim. "Smoke, kid?"

"Thanks." Jim lit up. "And I'm thanking you for letting me ride that bronc'. If you'd lent me a race-horse, I wouldn't have covered much trail in this burro country."

Tub Murchoree began to chuckle, the movement starting at the bottom of his paunch and moving steadily upward in visible wrinkles. Jim thought he was going to have another fit of horse colic. Sondergarde and Texas Silver were snickering. "The poor ignorant young ranny!" Tub laughed. "Riding that cayuse all the way from Borax to Grizzly Wells, and says he wasn't on a race-horse! That's a good one!"

JIM flared up. "Say, listen. Anyone laughs at that horse again, there'll be singing at your ranch, and you won't hear it. He's outlasted every fantail in your cracked-hoof posse. Look at the best one you had—Tub's horse—dead yonder: Splint from shin blows, scratches, capped elbow, puffy fetlocks. And look at this little cayuse. Sound as when we started. A little knotty in his muscles, perhaps, but that means large bone. His short neck shows his power, and he's got hoofs that'd make a mule-deer look club-footed. Think you can laugh at that short back? Oh, no! That shows Arab."

"But still and all, he aint exactly a race-horse, is he, Jim?" Tub was twinkling all over his enormous face.

"Well, the boss promised me a race-horse," Jim said, puzzled. "And his word's pretty good. Course I knew he was just blowflying me."

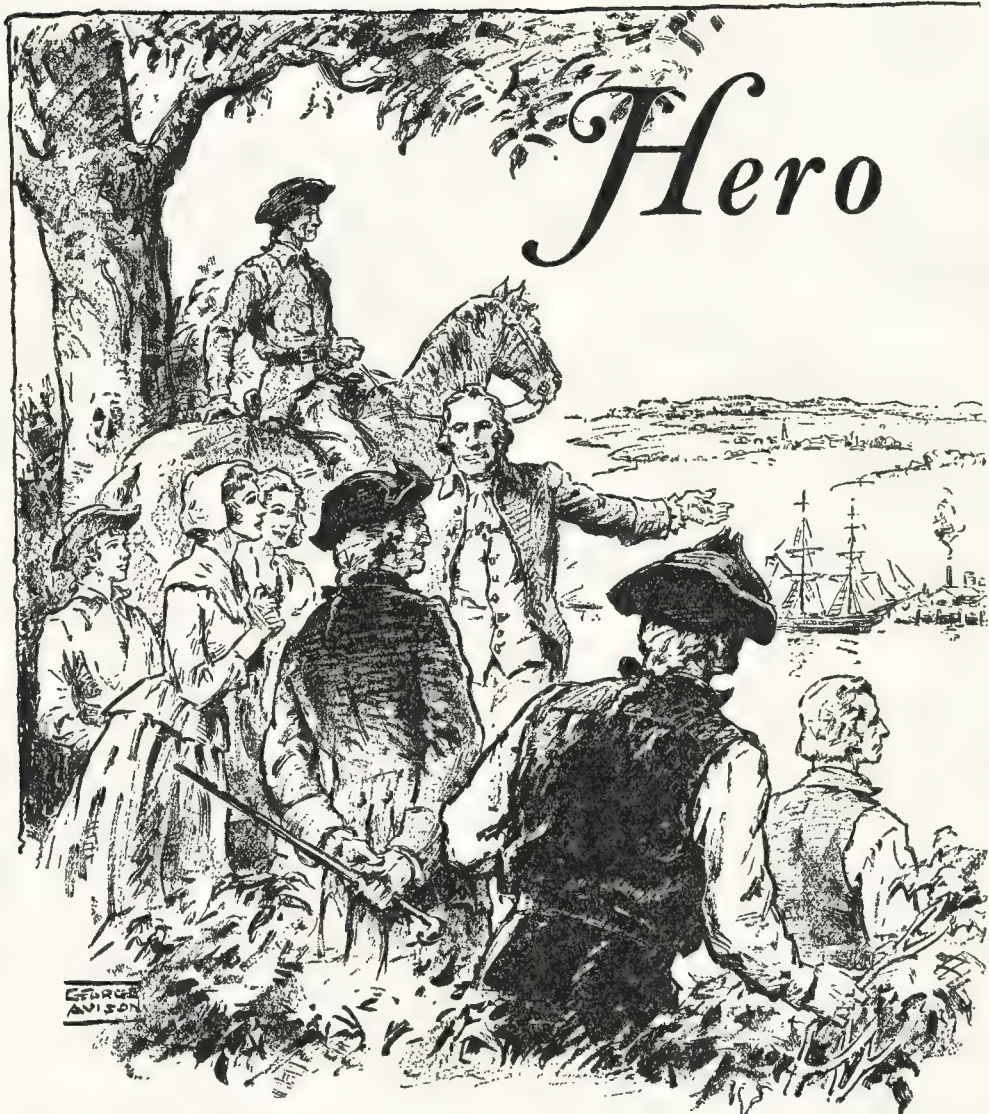
"And I thought you were blowflying me about that mink-skin pouch," Nick Buckley said with a long-lipped grin.

The Sheriff chuckled violently. "You didn't stretch the cayuse out to see how fast he would go, did you, Jim?"

"Why," Jim said blankly, "I took it for granted he couldn't race a spavined mare. I stayed out of your way and let him beat you walking." He looked helplessly at Buckley. "That's what kettled me at first, your saying you were going to lend me the Son of Volcano."

Whoops turned to guffaws. Jim did not see the joke. Tub wiped his eyes, crying: "Why, listen, Jim, if you'd stretched that horse just once, you'd get the joke. That there little burro-horse is the Son of Volcano!"

THE END.



IN most of us beefy he-men there's a queer strain of sentiment for some school-teacher out of the past; and I don't mean any Freudian yearnings, either—but ordinary respect. . . .

After twenty years of wandering, in passing through Columbus, I looked up Miss Noble. She was older, retired, living in a little dream of a cottage; otherwise just the same. With the same gentle confidence in what she knew and was, the same understanding smile and wise, aloof heart. We went out for dinner, and came back to her cottage and talked, and she unfolded a map before me.

"Here's something that should interest you, since you're so fond of ships," she said. "It's intimately connected with the greatest development ever made in that field."

At first glance, the map was a crude affair such as a child might have drawn from memory, showing the "northwest parts of the United States" in 1785, from the Ohio to the Canadian border. Then I saw it was engraved. It was dotted with queer comments on places and things, and had been made by one John Fitch.

"What on earth has it to do with ships?" I demanded.

Miss Noble smiled.

"So I can still teach you something. Did you never hear of this man Fitch?"

"Never."

A faint color rose in her cheeks.

"Oh! You've missed something really great!" she said earnestly. "He made the map from his own surveys along the frontier. He learned to engrave by do-

By **H. BEDFORD-JONES** *and*



The story of John Fitch and his steamboat is the basis of this, the twenty-fourth story in the much-discussed "Ships and Men" series.

ing powder-horns for Indians, and brass buttons for British soldiers, when he was a Revolutionary prisoner. But the greatest thing of all—"

She paused, a trifle embarrassed by her own enthusiasm. Then:

"Fitch was the kind of man you read about in ancient sagas, the primitive hero type, who fights an eternally losing battle with destiny, yet clings to his ideal and struggles on, rising superior to disaster. At every turn of his life, a malign fate smote him in the very instant of success; but how he fought back! It's a story that ought to be in every schoolbook. He was a plain, hard, uncouth Yankee, rugged as an oak, with a smattering of education."

"I thought you said it had to do with ships?" And I tapped the old engraved map.

"It has everything to do with them! You'll see. And his story is the most American thing I know, in its ingenuity and indomitable resolution. You see, I must make you visualize the man himself. . . . But are you interested?"

"Very much," I replied. She drew a deep breath, smiled again, and smoothed out her skirts with the old prim gesture I remembered from twenty years back.

"It grips me, the story of that man," she went on slowly. "He had great ex-



Illustrated by George Avison
and Yngve E. Soderberg

(See inside front cover)

pectations, when he made that map. He had every reason to think he would be appointed surveyor to the new Northwest Territory, which not only carried a salary, but meant that his land-grant to thousands of acres would be confirmed. Politicians got ahead of him, and another man was appointed surveyor. At one blow he had lost everything. But I do want to make you see what was in the man himself—"

AND she did. A man held by a single flaming purpose, who just missed wealth as he missed everything else. A shrewd Indian-fighter, a surveyor of the frontier rivers and forests. A man strug-

CAPTAIN L. B. WILLIAMS

gling, and daily trampling down impossibility. A man all alone, but hardy, with queer gifts both of brain and of fingers, trudging the frontier traces and the streets of cities; a man presenting immortality to Benjamin Franklin—who, possessing it already, ignored the gift.

A man with the spark of vision in his brain, the vision of a boat propelled by steam power. A man otherwise empty-handed, but far from empty-headed. In that day, before railroads were known, the future of America seemed to lie in its waterways, in its canals and rivers and ports.

"Y' know, Cobe,"—and Fitch scratched that long nose of his, as he sat in the wheelwright's log shop which he called home, down in Bucks County, Pennsylvania,—“if Congress had app'nted me surveyor to the Northwest and upheld my land-grant, I'd be a rich man today! But it just aint so. And times has changed. You got to have money to get anywhere, these days.”

“Well, you got the map, John,” said Cobe Scout, the wheelwright. “It'd ought to do right well. Folks going into the territories need a map, and yours is the thing to sarve 'em proper.”

“Aye, it'll do, but it won't make me rich.”

Fitch went on with his labor. Here was the sheet of copper; he had hammered it out and polished it himself. Now, with his sole tool a graver, he was engraving upon it his own map of the Northwest, fruit of his wanderings and surveys. The Northwest was being opened, and people had need of such a map, and there was none to serve their purpose. He was doing a beautifully precise job of it, too.

“I seen Charley Garrison today,” said the wheelwright. “He says, sure, you can use his cider-press to print your map on. Only you got to clean it up afterward.”

So the map was born, beyond civilization and printing-presses.

FITCH was fired to the task, the horizon opening to his vision of a boat not driven by hands. It was nothing to him that never before had one man conceived, engraved and printed a map; John Fitch could do it, and did.

Then he set forth to sell his map for bread, and to sell his vision to those who might forward it. He knew nothing about steam or engines, but he learned. There were, indeed, only three engines

in America at the time, and these were for pumping water.

So, that summer, he moved in upon Philadelphia with his maps and model boat and his wild, fierce hopes—a man bent upon conquest. Selling his maps on the way, he fought doggedly on to Trenton and on to the seat of government in New York itself, interviewing man after man of prominence, displaying plans and sketches and boat model. Man after man approved it, somewhat blankly, and gave him letters to the next.

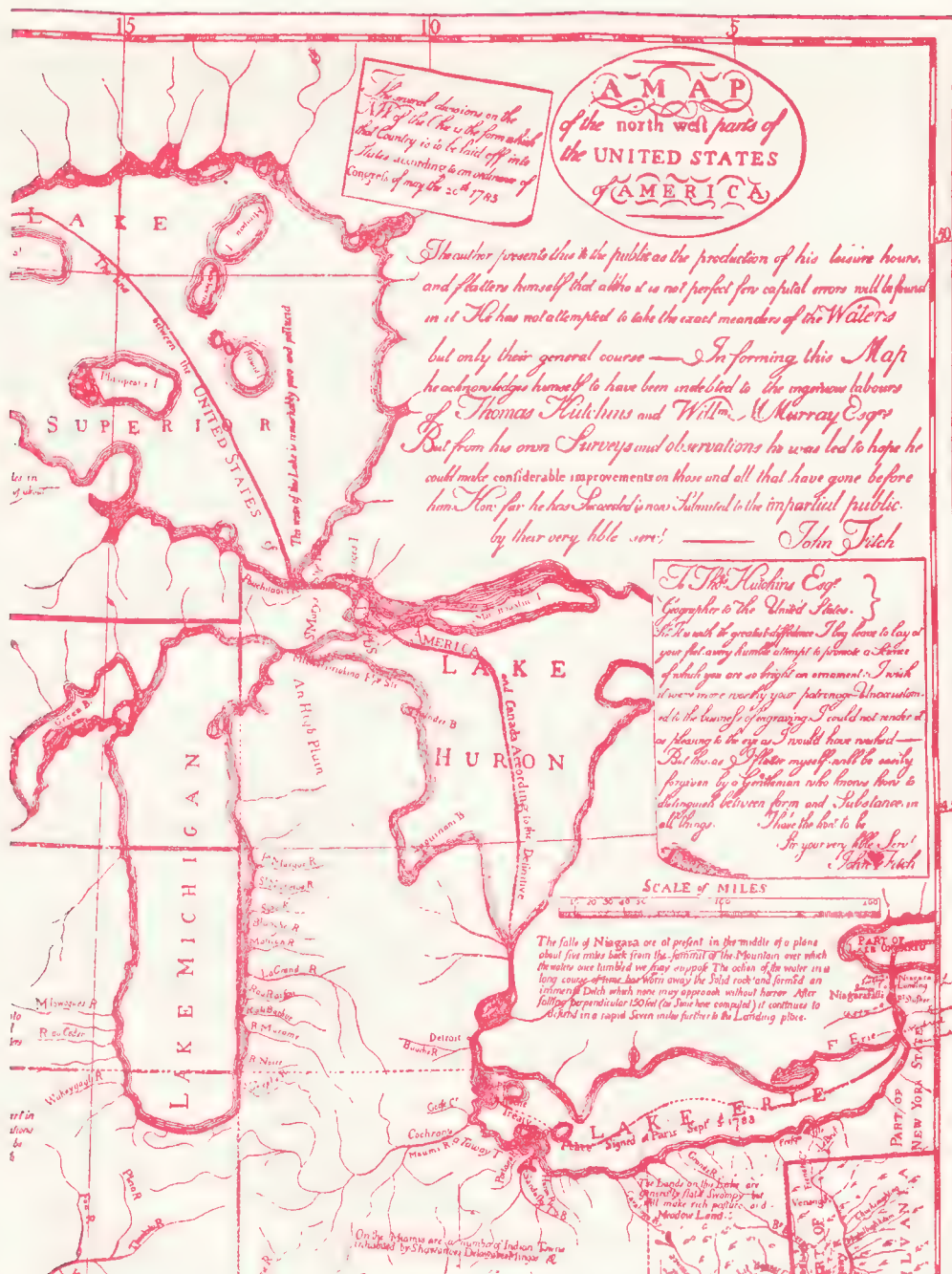
In New York, a petition to Congress went into a committee waste-basket. But the Spanish minister met this wild-eyed, hard-jawed man and caught fire from his vision, shared his enthusiasm, and approved his designs. Here was a definite offer. Money? It would be supplied for experiments, by all means; and in return, naturally, exclusive rights must go to Spain.

“Not by a long shot!” declared John Fitch, folding up his designs. “Not while I'm an American!” He never thought again of the Spanish offer; not even with a regretful twinge in dark days.

BACK he wandered to Philadelphia, with his horse-cart; there he saw the aged Ben Franklin, and presented his model and plans to that gentleman's Philosophical Society. Then on back to Bucks County again, serenely confident that Franklin was behind him and would see him through. Vain confidence! His wakening was bitter.

More tramping and map-selling. Now to Mount Vernon, to see General Washington, and another blank draw; the old General was not interested in steam-boats. On to Richmond and to Patrick Henry—a great name. The same dogged presentation of letters, the same eager argument; and, in a sudden blaze, encouragement from the Virginia Assembly. No money, true, but many promises.

Heartened by this, the gaunt, rugged figure trudged on into Maryland and on into New Jersey, and here the spark struck fire. In March, 1786, the legislature gave him exclusive steamboat-rights on all waters of the State. Recognition! No money, but that would come, and meantime the maps sold well. Now back to Philadelphia, where he knew many prominent men, to form a stock-company. Fitch went at it with feverish energy, and after a week of hard work he had the job completed. Four hundred



Courtesy of the New York Public Library.
 One of the maps John Fitch engraved to earn his living while he experimented with his steamboat.

dollars was subscribed. Better still, three hundred was paid down on the nail—with which to build the first steamboat.

The hard-jawed, hard-handed truder had never so much as seen a steam engine. With the horizon of his vision overpassed, he was now face to face with cold reality; being the man he was, he pitched at it headlong. . . .

Over a dram in a tavern, he met Henry Voigt, the clockmaker of Second Street, a handsome, stubborn Dutchman. The

story was told; there was a quick glow of hot eyes, a swift exchange of words, a flying of sparks. The two men somehow clicked. It was an electric meeting.

"My hand on it!" Voigt stretched his arm across the table, gripped the hard bony fingers of Fitch, and rolled forth a joyous oath: "Be damned to the lot of 'em—we'll show them! You and I can do it, man, and do it we will. You've got a workshop?"

"Well," Finch grinned happily, "there's an old warehouse down on the shore that

can be rented. I reckon we can have the place to ourselves. I've got an idea about working the side paddles by a shaft and chain, like I said. If you and I can build the engine—"

"Build it? We can build a dozen!" cried Voigt. "We'll have to make a model, to be sure of it. Meantime, we can try out your chain-and-paddle contraption, to see if it works all right. Bring your designs and plans over to the shop, right now."

Fitch was all in a glow, inspired by achievement and a new horizon. Late into the night the two men talked, and with every moment grew more sure of one another. They separated with rum-fumes and vision sadly intermingled, but with the design of the engine somehow worked out and settled.

Now the old warehouse by the Delaware took on life and hummed with frenzied activity. When Fitch flung himself into an enterprise, he went at it full vigor and energy, and Henry Voigt was like him. The two men moved in, working early and late, and to Fitch's vast delight, he discovered in Voigt a genius for mechanics, that could translate his somewhat chimerical notions into hard fact. They were a perfect team, each complementing the other.

The model steam engine, with a one-inch cylinder, progressed under their combined efforts; if it proved feasible, the next step would be one with a three-inch cylinder to be installed in a skiff. But first came the mechanism that was to be worked by this power of steam, and Voigt was keenly impressed by the importance of this point.

Before the model was completed, Fitch had the paddle mechanism with its endless chain in shape. To make sure this would propel a boat, they decided to give it a trial by hand. Fitch began to realize this was, indeed, the crucial point of the whole affair. Unless the boat was sent forward, the engine would be useless.

SO the mechanism was installed in a light skiff; and out of the water it worked like a charm. On the afternoon of July 20th, they launched the skiff with its apparatus in place, and Fitch went to work at the shaft.

In no time at all, a crowd gathered along the wharves to observe the operation. Boatmen and roustabouts, loungers and townfolk, to whom Voigt was a well-known and highly respected tradesman. Fitch worked away; he stared at Voigt,

mopped his face, fell to labor again. The machinery moved, but the boat did not. A few jeering cries came from the crowd, quickly taken up and increased by other voices.

"No go, Harry," said Fitch despondently. Voigt flushed under the storm of catcalls and jeering remarks, then turned white as a sheet.

"For God's sake, get out of this, then," he snapped. "I've let myself in for this tomfoolishness—it'll ruin me. Take the oars! Let me out of this accursed skiff!"

Fitch fell to work at the oars, and rowed ashore, stunned and heartbroken. As the skiff touched, Voigt jumped to the landing stairs and departed without a word. Fitch put away the boat, and made no response to the free-and-easy remarks hurled after him; but as he walked up the street his spare, lean frame drooped. He stopped in at a tavern and called for rum, and more rum.

NEXT day he wakened sick and despondent, courage gone out of him. No work this day; no word from Voigt. Everything was ended. His great hope had been that the steam-engine would work his chain-and-paddle mechanism; now it was smashed. The very foundation of his whole work was gone.

A heartsick, terrible day. Night came at last; he had not left his boarding-house. He lay awake, staring into the darkness as the hours sounded. Midnight came and went. One o'clock—suddenly it flashed into his mind. He leaped out of bed, trembling with eagerness as the vision took hold. He saw the thing in a split second, lit a candle, sat down to table and made a rough draft. Cranks, of course! Cranks and paddles—why, there was the answer!

In the cold dawn he went to Voigt's house on Second Street, called Voigt down in nightcap and gown, and spread the diagram before him with excited words. Voigt eyed it sleepily; his face cleared; suddenly he took Fitch by the shoulders.

"You've got it!" he cried, his eyes ablaze. "You've got it, John! Come on down to the shop—wait till I get some clothes—"

They went back to work together.

Once more they were united in a common vision, and the weather mattered not at all to them; they labored on through the hot sweating days, the steaming nights. The tiny engine model was completed, and it worked admirably.

HERO IN DEFEAT

Now came the three-inch cylinder, and this moved on apace, while the cranks and paddles were brought to proper adjustment and tested. Money ran low, but what of that? Success meant that further funds would be provided. In a frenzy of enthusiasm, the larger engine was finished up and tried, and found perfect enough, it seemed. Now for the boat, and no public test this time, with half the town looking on!

Quietly, without a word to anyone, the two men shoved out into the river on a warm summer's morning. They crammed the firebox. They watched the machine anxiously. Steam mounted, and more wood was shoved in. Before their intent gaze, the piston began to chug bravely away. The cranks and paddles fell to work. The skiff moved. It moved upstream! It kept on moving, and it gained speed.

"Done it!" An exultant yell burst from Voigt as he clapped Fitch on the shoulder. "It works, John, it works! Look at her go!"

The haggard, lined features of John Fitch warmed and relaxed. A glow came into his deep eyes; here, for the first time, all his labor and vision and dream were justified. He said nothing; but as he watched the shores flit past at a good six miles per hour, the cup of his happiness brimmed to the full. The impossible had come true; his faith had borne fruit. Words, at such a time, were such little things!

The news was broken to the stockholders next day.

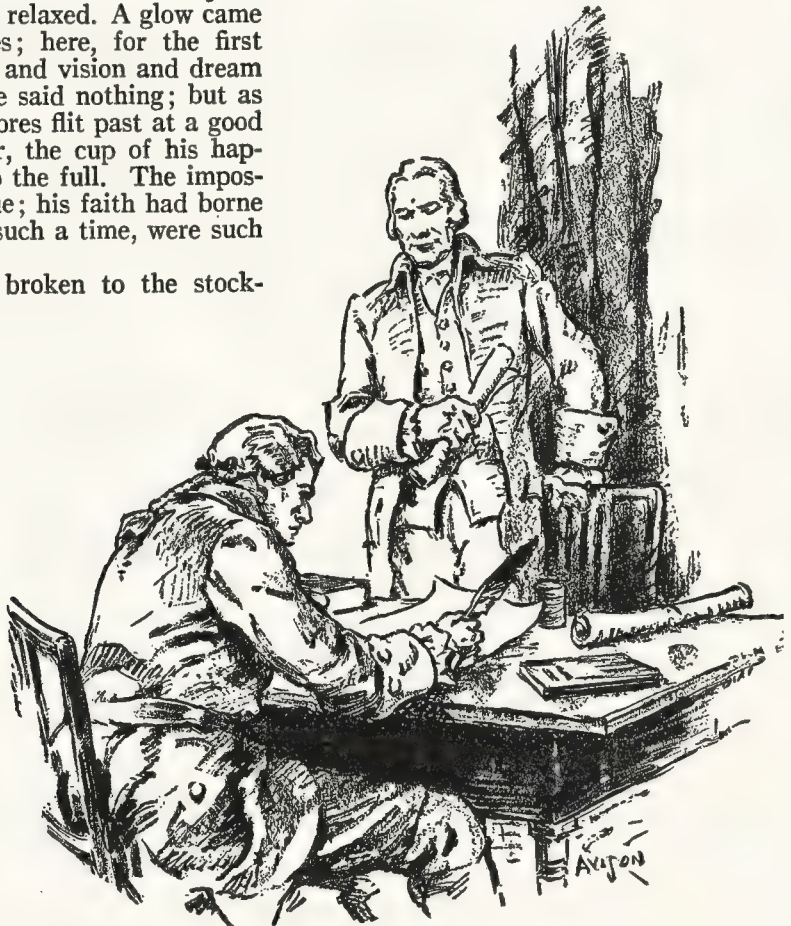
Dr. Say the philosopher, the baker, the butcher, the merchants and others, were all assembled. The tale of success was told, the skiff was put to work. All the money had been used up, but here was success undoubted! The company was amazed, exultant, grateful.

Now to make the thing commercially profitable. A forty-five-foot boat would be required, and must be constructed at once. Fitch calculated that an engine with a twelve-inch cylinder would furnish sufficient power.

No one, however, would put up the additional capital.

At this and further meetings, new questions arose. After all, there was no monopoly on the thing except in New Jersey waters. Anybody could steal the idea. Fewer stockholders appeared. Commercial profits? Perhaps; but they were not visible.

Grim and sunken-eyed, his lips compressed, John Fitch stared across the tavern table at Henry Voigt. Success



In 1787 the tide turned. . . . Fitch went to New York, —interested Alexander Hamilton. Everything was coming now!



That night, malign fate struck again: the new boat took fire, burned, sank.

had come and gone. The fight had to be waged all over again. Fitch flew into a rage with the blind fools who could not see his own vision.

"But I'll manage the money somehow!" he swore. "Sell the model, seek capital elsewhere, sell my own stock if needs must—but I'll do it!"

"We'll do it," corrected Voigt. The company had magnanimously voted him two shares of the stock to recompense his labors.

Letters, appeals, frantic cries to the Pennsylvania Assembly; the result was nil. Weeks passed into months. The stockholders lost interest.

Suddenly Voigt had an idea. The New Jersey monopoly was bootless, but with similar patents from other legislators, interest would spring up. More documents would bring in more money. Why not try?

Fitch tried, but Pennsylvania remained chill to his pleas. Then, in February of 1787, the tide turned. The Delaware Assembly granted the requested monopoly there. Flushed with this success, Fitch went to New York. He interested Alexander Hamilton, and in March an act was passed; with this monopoly in his pocket, Fitch found Pennsylvania suddenly inclined to favor him. Another monopoly there. Everything was coming now!

And Voigt was correct. Documents drew money; the stockholders woke up, the cash was voted, the large boat was ordered.

THE boat was built. Once more the old warehouse saw Fitch and Voigt hard at it, day and night, laboring over the large engine. Day after day, week after week, until June wore on again and all Philadelphia jeered at the inventors. After repeated and heart-breaking efforts, Voigt's genius at last brought the large engine to passable perfection.

And the boat worked! Once again, success!

It worked, but imperfectly. Fitch, however, learned by the failings of this engine. He saw that the cylinder must be larger, the entire style of the job must be recast. There was no money in the thing yet; it must be made right. No money? The stockholders sat aghast when he told them the blunt truth. Ye gods! The man was mad!

Not mad, but destitute.

Sacrifices were made; stock was sold; and after grim hard months of labor, a new engine sat in the now battered hull. A public trial was made now. Fitch and Voigt were confident that no weak spot had been overlooked. Exultant triumph was ahead this time!

And they were right. Triumph indeed! Crowds were everywhere to see the sight. The paddles chunked merrily, the boat walked up the current at a fair speed. A delegation from Bucks County was on hand to applaud success, boats and ships sent cheers of amazement and delight across the water. The roar of cannon sounded in congratulation.

The chugging craft bore on upstream to Burlington, where a tremendous crowd waited. She was headed in for the Burlington Landing and the ovation there—and without warning the boiler blew out. Destiny had struck in the very instant of acclaim.

With it, the hearts of two men were close to breaking.

However, the boiler was replaced, and the boat began to make trips on schedule with gratifying regularity. At this point it developed that the craft was too slow for commercial use on the Delaware. She was losing money. A new hull must be had to give the proper speed. This discouraged the stockholders; many of them backed out altogether.

Voigt, facing stark poverty, took to drink and became quarrelsome, and withdrew from the whole thing.

Fitch, leaner and grimmer than ever, drove doggedly ahead. He made new gains, brought fresh men into the company, once more forged upstream. Money was put up and a new boat was built. Voigt was drawn in to work on the engine.

At last came the great day when it was tried out. The two friends looked on as the test was made, and words failed them. Here was perfection, absolute perfection! The engine was superb. The boat had speed, room, everything! At last, after so many failures, success was absolutely certain.

That night, malign fate struck again. The new boat took fire, burned, sank.

John Fitch gave up, momentarily. He trudged home to Bucks County in rags, cleaning and repairing clocks for a living. He had not a cent to his name. His vision had proven empty and barren. His stock in the company was gone. His maps no longer sold.

YET the company, without him, made some headway. When he slogged back to Philadelphia, a gaunt and grim figure, to live on charity, the company was flourishing and at work on another and better steamboat. Fitch looked on and perceived mistakes, and voiced his thoughts. Mistakes, one after another. This engine would not work, and he told them why. The stockholders, grudgingly, took him back into the company.

They were well repaid for the deed. The new craft was tried out. She worked to a charm, an accomplished success at last. In 1790 she covered nearly three thousand miles, running on a regular schedule. The ragged scarecrow was full fed and clothed now. One day a fine gentleman came and watched the boat running. Aaron Vail was this man's name—he was newly appointed a consul in a French port.

"Come to France with me," he said to John Fitch. "I'll pay all expenses, and I'll get a patent from the king for your steamboat there—the French will be wild about this invention!"

And so John Fitch, a success at last, a tricolored cockade in his hat, backing and fame assured him, stepped aboard a packet and sailed away.

I LOOKED up in surprise as Miss Noble ceased speaking. She seemed to have forgotten me; she had fallen into thoughtful, half-puzzled reflection.

"Well?" I prompted her, and at sound of my voice she started slightly and turned to me. "Well? So we leave your hero there, with fame and success ahead?"

She smiled slightly.

"Oh, that's not quite the end, you know! The boat was built in France; patents were granted; everything was lovely—and then the Revolution broke, and the whole thing fell like a house of cards. Fitch came home. His boat here had not made money. Litigation arose, bickering, and struggles. The invention worked perfectly, but there was no profit in it. Fitch, a spectral figure, disappeared into the backwoods whence he had come. He was still unbowed by destiny. The last we hear of him, he was hoping to get a steamboat built on the Ohio. And there the curtain falls."

I drew a deep breath.

"At least, the man lives again in your words, Miss Noble! The man, struck down time after time at the very moment of success—still struggling on! Heroic in his failure—is that what you meant by your primitive type of hero?"

"No," she said rather tartly, "it's not. Heroic failure, indeed! Can't you see that it was a heroic success—that this man, breasting a continual evil destiny, was himself a great figure, a great emblem of success?"

"Success?" I shrugged. "Hardly success, as the world understands the word."

"Doesn't success mean anything higher to you?" she broke in. "Doesn't it mean anything nobler or finer than the worldly hope men set their heart upon? If Fitch's plans and designs were stolen and used by others, if he died poor, like Christ—can you call it failure? Then look at this." She flung down a postcard before me. "Look at this, and think of John Fitch every time you see it."

The postcard held a colored view of a great ocean liner.

Another colorful story in this fine series will appear in the next (the January) issue.

The Revolt of the

By WILLIAM MCKEEVER

The Story So Far:

IN a ten-acre enclosure walled with growing bamboo, and lying in a hollow of the hills near San Francisco, I had grown to young manhood, among a colony of Chinese—whom I took to be of my own race. I had but one dreamlike memory of a life other than this—of a moment in infancy when a white, maternal face dear to me was made to vanish as I was surrounded by slant-eyed yellow folk who bore me away.

It was in my twenty-first year that I was first taken outside that bamboo enclosure and made acquaintance with the white world of California in the Eighties, as John Elwin. (This is not, of course, my real name, but a fictional one chosen at random; for I have no wish to suffer the impertinent curiosity of strangers which publication of my extraordinary narrative would provoke.) My employment was a strange one—delivery of fireworks in sealed packages to the Chinese of the mining-camps. Only after I had made several trips, did I discover I was delivering—not fireworks, but opium!

Enraged, I returned to the bamboo enclosure to demand of old Sam Chong, who was in charge, that he tell me about this business. He complied—told how the evil traffic had grown under management of a mysterious white man whom he called the Unseeable White Boss. The opium was grown on an island somewhere in the Pacific known as Poppy Island, brought to San Francisco in crude form as “dried Chinese vegetables” and refined by supposed fireworks-makers at the stockade. I demanded of Sam Chong the name of this White Boss; but just then a shot was fired through a crack in the door, and the old man fell dead.

Sam Chong’s son Sam Lee and I fled, through the fog to hide in the city. . . .

Strolling out one night, I was attracted by the sign outside a little mission on the Barbary Coast, and entered. A lovely young girl, attended by an old man, was conducting a service. Miss Virginia Crowell and Captain Binks, these were. Captain Crowell, Miss Virginia’s uncle, was a retired sea-captain, now engaged

in building steam craft for bay transportation. Captain Binks, a shipmaster also in retirement, lived with the Crowells.

Captain Crowell, whose avocation was reform of evil conditions in San Francisco, felt that I might be of aid to him; and soon my mother was found. Our reunion was happy; and her story proved dramatic indeed: As Edith Lankisham, a talented young actress, she had married John Elwin for love, only to be coveted by her husband’s closest friend, Richard Van Gyle. After a series of misfortunes, her husband disappeared; Van Gyle suggested that he had deserted her and their infant son. Months of waiting ensued; then one day her baby was forcibly abducted by a group of Chinese. Van Gyle offered to search for the child if she would allow him to provide for her, meanwhile. Desperate, she agreed. Year after year had passed under this arrangement. . . .

My mother and I decided to communicate, for the time, only through “blind” advertisements in the newspapers, using the names *Polly* and *Eddy*. But shortly after I had acquainted Captain Crowell with these facts, a *mêlée* broke out in Chinatown, and following this (in which I took an active part), I was tricked into the hands of a Chinese lieutenant of the White Boss. Bound and helpless, I was placed on board a ship sailing for Poppy Island. After days at sea, our arrival at the island was marked by fights, in which the strongest became gang-bosses under a huge hulk of a man, “Czar” Anderson. The island was a complete domain, in which force ruled supreme; the sole occupation was raising and harvesting the crop of opium-poppies by slave-labor under direction of a Chinese scientist, Ku Li Wu. I became a boss, and held with grim determination to my job of keeping my gang in order. (*The story continues in detail:*)

ONE day a ship put in that was not the *Pacific Rose*. But she had come with orders to be loaded with a cargo of “vegetables” for some other port. I

White One

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson



The climax of this stirring and wholly unusual novel of a white boy brought up as a Chinese in old California.

never learned the particulars of that shipment, which seemed to be something unusual for the island. The secret of finding it was known only to the opium traffickers, and I am sure that the White Boss must have signed the orders, or the boat would never have landed.

If so, he had signed a contract for trouble!

TO load her in the haste demanded because of threatening weather, all the gangs, Chinese and white, were brought in from the field. It was then I discovered the number of white gangs besides my own doubled crew.

Four catwalks were stretched from the ship to shore, and two endless chains of coolies sprinted with bags out of the warehouse. I was stationed with my crew at the front end, and the men moved like clockwork. Next to me was a smaller white gang with whom their boss seemed to have a deal of trouble. The men were nervous and awkward and he yelled at them constantly.

It was the first time I ever saw Czar Anderson take a hand in superintending things; he stayed in the warehouse possibly to keep the gangs from mingling. There was a reason for it which I presently will come to—an ample reason!

I looked past the middle gang to a tall, silent man at the far end, who seemed to handle his crew with the same ease I did. I was struck by the similarity of his actions all the way through, and fell to observing him covertly.

Czar Anderson seemed to be comparing our methods and results with the poor showing the middle gang made, and once he walked over and tapped that boss on the shoulder and spoke curtly.

The ship was loaded in a few hours and sent on her way, rejoicing at being free so soon of a dangerous port.

"Come to headquarters," Czar Anderson ordered me in passing, and I obeyed instantly. I made no mistake of harboring any grudges against him. I would fight him, yes, in a conflict having the dignity of war, but it would not be with my bare hands. There simply was no brawling with him.

He preceded me into the office, took a chair, and we were presently joined by the tall man who had the gang at the far end, and the middle-gang boss who had difficulty with his men. My eyes lingered upon the tall man of coppery hair and beard. Such a fine-looking face was a surprise in a place of this kind!

Anderson addressed himself to the other boss. "Bloch, I'm dividing your gang up between these two men, who know how to handle men—and get results. I'm being hammered at for production—new demands for poppies. So I'm passing the buck on to you fellows. Come on out and get it over with."

Outside, Bloch's gang stood around in uncertain attitude. They were having new slave-drivers forced upon them willy-nilly for the sake of results. Yet I am sure that a man working under kindly treatment can turn out more labor with less depreciation upon himself than one who is kept on a nervous edge.

"Fight it out between you. Take your pick of the lot," ordered Anderson.

"How about fightin' me first?" demanded Bloch. "That's always been the way."

"Maybe we'll do that too," said the tall field-boss evenly.

"Better let me take him on, my friend," I suggested softly. I could see gray in the hair over his ears.

"I've taken the places of men like him for over twenty years, son," returned the other casually. "It won't be hard to work under me, partner."

A STRANGE presentiment shot through me and held me mute, as my rival in the gang's division faced it out with Bloch, staring the other down.

"I'll give over—take the damn' lay-out!" said Bloch nervously.

"Then I'll take you in my gang for first pick," said his conqueror; then turning to me: "Your turn to choose now, son."

I gulped queer feelings and made a choice, picking the worst looker of the bunch. My rival chose the next worst looker, and that is the way we kept it up until the gang, evenly numbered, was taken over. Nothing could have been fairer. I wondered if Czar Anderson had noticed the strict diplomacy observed between his two surviving field-bosses in that contest of fair play!

To the two of us now Anderson said: "Go to your separate dormitories, and remember the rules here against visiting. None of that. I'll kill the first man who disobeys, and the whole lot of you if it's necessary. . . . Take 'em away."

My rival turned his back on me deliberately, and shrugging an order to his men, led off. He continued on with his crew to the long building farthest down the avenue of gums.



As the day wore on,
I taught them certain
signals and passwords.
This kept them keyed
up, but secretive.

As it was too late to go back to the fields, we reposed in the shade. I gave myself up to much thinking, the most of it rebellious. I had found a human being upon this island with whom I would have enjoyed frequent society. I could not get him out of mind. His hair almost the shade of mine—

I shook my head determinedly at the suggestions they conjured. *That* was impossible—at least improbable. Yet he had mentioned having been here twenty years. . . .

I lay upon my bunk a long time after dark without a light. When I felt sure that everybody in the long dormitory had gone to sleep, I stealthily slipped out of doors, paused to get my bearings under the stars, then crouching like a sneak, I set out for the farthest building along the avenue of gums. I had been sold once before by a white man, and I wouldn't have trusted any of my gang that night with my secret.

The building for which I was headed was about a mile from my own quarters. All of these gang quarters being arranged on the same general plan, I quickly made out the small building assigned to the

boss, and employed stealth again. He too might have fawning traitors in his gang who would sell us both to gain favor of Anderson.

I knocked ever so lightly, prepared to take it on the run away from there if I had made a mistake.

"Come in, son," said a lowered voice, and my heart nearly stopped. This was the third time my rival had addressed me by that term. This time he used it as if he meant it!

I stepped inside; strong hands reached for me, and in a moment we embraced. I could not doubt his relationship. It seemed impossible, however, even then.

"Do—do you really believe, sir, that we are father and son?" I inquired rather breathlessly.

"My boy, only one person in the world could have the eyes of Edith, my wife—and that would be her son," he replied with uncontrolled agitation. "And didn't you—didn't you have just a little suspicion that I might be your father? I saw you look at me several times in a way that has made me wonder. You

must tell me what it all means, why you are here, and what has become of your mother. . . . Come—sit over here on your bunk with me. We must sit in the dark—and whisper your story.”

His fingers gripped my arms until they hurt, but it was a pleasant hurt.

“I did have the strangest feeling when I first saw you,” said I. “But if you suspected my identity, why did you call me ‘son’ twice in front of Czar Anderson? He must know our relationship, and has been ordered to keep us from meeting. That is why he avoided calling either of us by name.”

“That is what I surmised—that he was to keep us from meeting. I heard of the new white gang coming in on the last trip of the *Pacific Rose*, but not until this morning did I get to see who was boss of it; and then when I passed you and got a glimpse of your eyes, I had to hurry along to get a grip on myself. I called you ‘son’ in front of Anderson simply to throw him off his guard. If you hadn’t have come to me tonight, I would have gone to you.”

REALIZING how much there was to tell, I gave only the more important episodes, planning to fill in the details for him in other meetings to come.

Again and again my father’s fingers closed viselike upon my arm at dramatic points in my recital.

“God, son, why are such monsters permitted to live in the Kingdom of Christ—supposed to be the earth? I knew that Dick Van Gyle had few scruples about taking what he wanted; I was his steady influence in college. I helped him through two bad scrapes, and his own people begged my family to let him come West with us so that I could continue looking after him. Then I met Edith, and love brought us tragedy. I let our love blind me to Dick’s infatuation for her, that’s all. Since I have had so much time to go back over events, twenty maddening years of it, I could see where, instead of my looking after Dick, he had become my evil genius. I knew he was worming his way into the running of many shady enterprises, but still I was blind to the designs he had on Edith.

“I know now that he was back of every discharge that kept me hunting a new job as soon as I found work. I answered an advertisement for an instructor of English to some two dozen Chinese. I thought of starting a school

of my own after more experience with the class I was hired to teach. I kept my job a secret. I didn’t even know that Edith had found out about it until she told me.

“It was while I was leaving the classroom to go home one night that a mob of Chinese attacked me and carried me into one of the alley dives in Chinatown. Your description of Ko Fong tallies exactly with the boss of that mob. I was taken aboard ship that same night, and brought here.

“Poppy culture was only getting a start. Powell, the engineer, a fellow with a shady reputation in the States, had charge of the island then. He was not a bad sort, but he did as he was told. He contracted to put in all the island equipment, and the ‘Syndicate,’ as he called it, agreed to furnish him all the labor. It was, as you see, slave labor. Troublesome labor. Whites weren’t born to be slaves, and the more who were shanghaied and shipped out, the more trouble there was.

“After finishing the first reservoir and so many became sick, with forty dying on arsenic water, there was mutiny, if you would call it that. Czar Anderson was sent out to take over, and immediately inaugurated the system of control by which you and I now are field-bosses of all the whites. I saw in a minute what I had better do, or go jump in the ocean. I fought the first fight for gang supremacy. If I was to be slave to Dick Van Gyle, I intended being a preferred slave, and not herding with the dock filth his land force was picking up to send out. I’ll say this for Dick, outside of his wrongs against you and me, he has made no mistakes in the shanghaied men. They have all been the very dregs of seaports, men who couldn’t keep a job anywhere in the world for wages. But he made a bad mistake in sending you here, my own son.”

“I understand you, Father; we’ll scheme and work toward getting off this island. Some Power has brought us together at last, and given the island into our possession—if we are only able to realize it and make the most of it.”

“Yes. Alone, I was unable to do a thing. There have been mutinies; other gang-bosses thought they could get possession. But Anderson alone quelled the uprising. True, he had a cannon, and all the poor devils had was a grudge and some rocks—no sense. But together, son, we will conquer!”

THE REVOLT OF THE WHITE ONE

CHAPTER XIII

IT was no easy thing parting with my father on the first occasion of our meeting in which we knew each other, both of us adults. But he said:

"Son, we've got to wait, and take this matter slowly. The slightest mistake will be fatal. We are too excited now to make plans. And we must each master his feelings before we see each other again. The plans will come when our minds are completely settled. And they must be studied carefully before we make

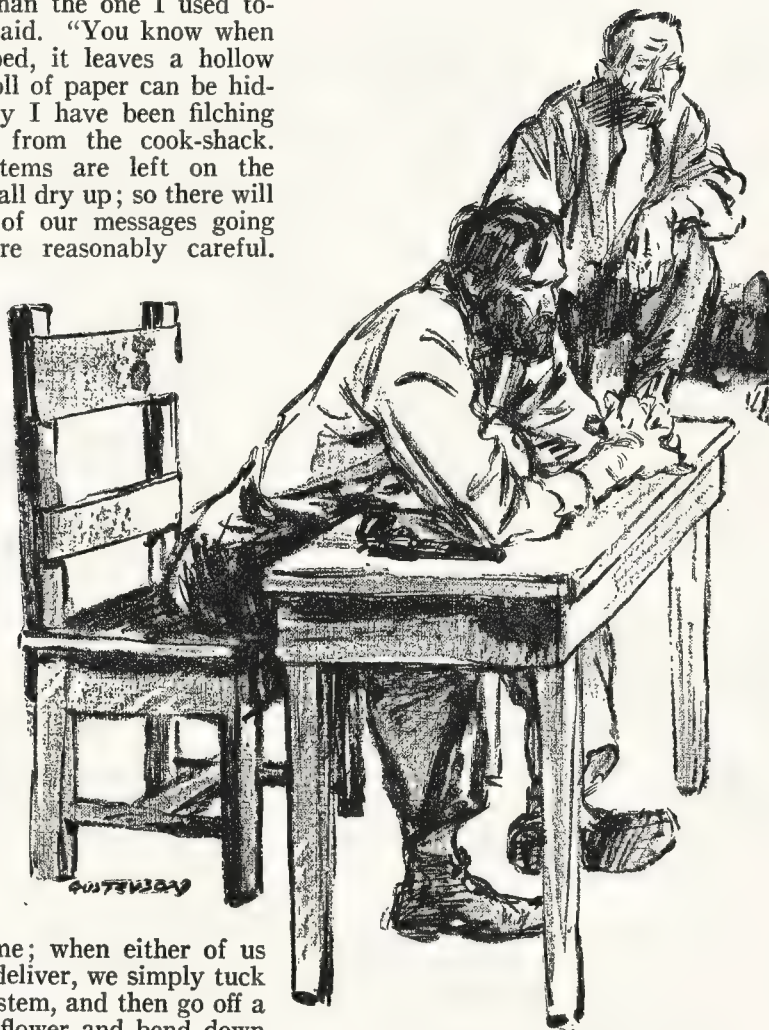
them known to even the most trustworthy in our gangs. We won't discuss it tonight, nor any means of communication. You had better come to me again in the way you have done tonight—say in four nights from now. Not before. By that time we both will have thought of things and we can compare them. On that occasion only plans alone must be discussed. We can give them our full concentration."

But the weather compelled me to postpone my next visit for a week. On the first bright day when I trailed my crew in from cultivating a particular field, and I had to pass a point where I knew he would cross my trail coming in from a patch on the other side of the avenue, I paused and quickly drew a large question-mark in the wet volcanic ash with the toe of my shoe. This was before the noon hour. I looked for the spot on returning to the field and found my mark rubbed out. In its place was a large exclamation-point. I kicked it out for caution's sake, and that night I stole forth to my father's quarters.



He dashed out at the front on a run, trying to climb into his pants, and bawling over and over: "Fire! Fire! Fire!"

"I have worked out a better plan for communication than the one I used to-day, Father," I said. "You know when a poppy is clipped, it leaves a hollow stem. Quite a roll of paper can be hidden in it. Lately I have been filching scraps of paper from the cook-shack. These clipped stems are left on the plants until they all dry up; so there will be little danger of our messages going astray, if we are reasonably careful.



The trial followed quickly. My father acted impartially as both prosecutor and defense attorney.

Here is my scheme; when either of us has a message to deliver, we simply tuck it down some cut stem, and then go off a few feet to some flower and bend down a petal as if we were examining the blossom for ripeness, as we are doing every day. But we bend this petal down in the direction of the stem bearing the note."

"Excellent! I won't even mention my own plan—yours is so much better," he declared. "But I have an accumulation of paper, and even pencils, that I've been hoarding for years. You can take some back with you. . . . Son, I feel young again since your coming. I'm only forty-four, and you are twenty-two. I believe happiness is just ahead for us both, if we just use our brains, and that means that we must, as soon as possible, complete our plans for taking over the island. I have long had in mind the idea of overthrowing Anderson, taking command myself; then I'd hoodwink a vessel into anchorage, board her with a large force when the catwalks are stretched, and

force the captain into taking us back to San Francisco. There are plenty of rifles at headquarters, once we capture Czar Anderson."

"I have been working out details of capturing Anderson myself, only it is too wet yet for the attempt."

"It has scarcely begun to get wet yet, son. February is usually the worst for about three weeks. March is generally warm, and then is when the picking rush comes on. More varieties ripen then than at any other season of the year. This year all the tillable land on the flats will be bearing. Whatever plan we decide on, we'd better wait until spring."

"Wait, wait, wait!" I sighed with ill relish. "The innocent must wait until the guilty take a nap! Yet there is a saying: 'The right amount of waiting, then the right amount of attacking, deliver the enemy into the victor's hands.'"



"You have the family genius for military tactics," said my father proudly.

"But I merely read that from the great stack of philosophical leaves which Sam Chong treasured so highly."

"Yes; you told me your first language was Chinese, and your accent has had a particular charm for me. I know Latin, Greek, a bit of German, some French, and Spanish. With you trading Cathay philosophy for my lore this winter, we should while away considerable sluggish time."

"But are we not to discuss plans exclusively now? Those were your words, the other day."

"Yes, yes—but I thought then of putting things through before the wet season. We dare not. . . . I want you to tell me all you can of her—Edith, your mother."

So I put aside mutiny suggestions and drew a picture of my mother in words just as my own brief meeting with her impressed me. Father spoke brokenly when I had finished.

"If you had lived with her all your life, you could not have painted more accurately the picture that has been engraved in my memory," he said. "We surely will talk over plans at our next meeting."

I RESTRICTED my visits to him to twice a month after that, choosing no particularly set dates. It is strange that I should have been brought up by an apt teacher, and then discover a born educator in my own father. Surely he would have attained an eminent place in letters had his career not been so tragically interrupted; he was not old, however; he could reach his mark yet.

As to our plans for capturing the island, we just let them simmer, adding to them as some new angle struck us. And yet they did not compare with what Fate had decided to work out for us, Fate being the compromise solution to the question of unearthly powers.

"Son," Father said to me once, "think no more of the wrongs that have been done us. They will be avenged in time. The world is kept moving by both good and evil. Sometimes it seems that evil is employed to bring about a great good, and at others so-called good amounts to the proportions of evil. My people were very zealous toward their beliefs and their aristocratic position. We will grant they were good, but it resulted evilly for me. On the other hand, this opium traffic shows to what extent a more real and noxious evil has been expanding in the land. Three foreign companies were engaged, you say, in dispensing drugs to whoever would buy. Dick Van Gyle will undoubtedly smash two of the companies and control everything. Some Power is simply employing evil to overcome evil, with a final plan of overthrowing the very agency. That is the part in which we fit. In planning our escape from this island, we must plan not to attack from grudge alone, but from a sense of righting a social wrong, and in such planning we'll succeed."

In presenting the matter to me in that light, I ceased to brood, and marveled at my father. He had learned in twenty years to dispense with brooding and keep faith in his Christian philosophy.

The rains came and went, ushering in a warm period and the incentive for the king flower of the island to blossom in larger force. I described them once as being beautiful. One can see so much of them, and be forced to think so much about them, that they become hideous. . . .

During that time I drew out certain picked workers in my gang who had responded intelligently to kind treatment, men who, away from even worse environment, had attained a measure of self-respect. I sounded them for loyalty and for what they might do if given a chance to escape—warning them not to talk about escape, even among themselves. They assured me if any intelligent plan of escape could be hatched up, one that looked failure-proof, they would be for it. I believed they would be good soldiers, and that was all I wanted to know.

ONE day I awoke to discover the island invaded by swarms of feathered visitors—wild pigeons. I knew what they were, from having seen swarms before in California. Before these shy creatures abdicated their favorite summer haunts to encroaching civilization, they yearly flocked in clouds against the

sun to the mountain regions high above the valleys.

On my first trip to the mountains, —with Gee Wan Ging,—it had been in the time of year that flocks were migrating from their winter lands on tropical islands to their mating-grounds in the Sierras. Those were tragic days for wild pigeons. White men with shotguns, Chinese with elaborate traps slaughtered them by the thousands. Now they have disappeared from the air-lanes of migratory birds in the West, and not a feather remains to tell of their former visits.

CAPTAIN BINKS had found not a bird here, when he was drawn to the island by its magnetic nature. He had missed the migratory season of the pigeons when they must have stopped for a period of rest before winging on to their summer haunts. They were here now, and the China gangs were out early with traps, enormous basket affairs made of gum twigs and twine. I had seen these traps stacked beside their quarters, but had never known or asked what they were for.

A Chinaman likes pigeon about as well as pork. There are frequent allusions to the wild pigeon throughout Chinese literature; it was the Chinese who taught pigeon-hunting with hawks to the Mongols, and the great Khan introduced falconry into Europe.

Recalling that bit of history brought to mind other uses for the pigeon and other uses for hawks. Pigeons were used by spies in enemy territory to carry secrets of military plans back to his countrymen.

Pigeons—the first winged messengers!

How my brain teemed with the possibilities! I didn't even wait to consult my father, but set my picked men to making traps and catching pigeons. Czar Anderson never moved from his quarters to see how things were going in the field. He trusted too fondly to his system of survival, to his reputation, to his verbal orders. In twenty years his system had not failed him. Nevertheless he kept within reach of a match to the fuse of his brass cannon loaded with slugs.

So the slaves in the field took time out to exact toll from the feathered visitors. I know not how many the Chinese caught, but in the first day my trappers brought in two hundred. I had a pen built on the south side of my own quarters to keep them in until I was ready to make use of them.

That night I lit the fat-burner I had fashioned to give me light, cut paper into proper size for a clearly written message, and kept up my writing until I could hold sleep off no longer.

The next day my trappers brought me a hundred more. It was almost too many. In the meantime I had coaxed from the Chinese cook a ball of flour-sack twine, and spent a good part of my time cutting strings about three inches long. I also wrote more messages.

Each message was worded the same; and besides carrying the secret of locating the island, and the chart position to pick it up from, I added:

Help: John Elwin, son, slavery, Poppy Island. Van Gyle head of vice ring in S. F. responsible.

I do not give that secret position here. I hope it has been forgotten by all who had to know it then.

I knew this: There was a chance that hunters would kill more than one of those birds carrying that message, and curiosity would carry the news to the papers. If the whole message was printed, Captain Crowell would get it, and he would be a powerful help in getting assistance sent us, zealous as he was to rid his city of corruption.

That night after dark I opened the door and dragged my coop, built long and narrow, into my cabin. Then I went to work tying messages to the legs of them,—an all-night job,—and setting them free. Not having enough for all the pigeons, I set the rest free, anyway.

When morning came, there was not a pigeon left on the island! Undoubtedly my carriers had taken a message of warning to the rest of the flock that now in the distance looked like a great calico cloud against the sunrise.

CHAPTER XIV

IT was a week before I saw my father again to tell him what I had done. We used our method of communication sparingly; and not a soul was the wiser for our having disobeyed orders.

"So that explains why those pigeons made such a short stay!" said he. "And since you have taken advantage of that, we both had better get busy with our other plans, don't you think?"

"That is why I am here tonight. I have my helpers picked for the rough stuff, but I have waited to tell them

their parts until we are ready. Tomorrow night is as good a time as to wait further. I'll do the firing of the warehouse myself, to draw Anderson outside. As soon as he is in the open, I will be at the head of my picked bunch ready to rush him. We will take him alive, and deal with him later.

"In the meantime, you and your gang take care of Ku Li Wu, then join us in putting out the fire. The building must not burn down, for it may excite suspicion on the part of any shipmaster coming to land. I thought of that when I tied on all those messages. Now we have two chances of getting off the island where we did have only one. Whatever ship, friend or foe, lands here now, we want to be masters of the island."

"Son, this is the only time since I have been on this island that I have subscribed to mutiny. It will have great weight with my own picked men; and once we take over, we have nothing to fear from the rest. Lord, I've waited twenty years for this chance! . . . Yes, that pigeon idea may work out to our salvation. I thought of it myself, fifteen years ago, but I had no one at home to appeal to, who would have been interested enough to come to my assistance. Do you think Captain Crowell will?"

"I do, I believe he is sincere about wanting some weapon to use against the vice rings in the city, and we know Van Gyle to be at the head of them. And then—I believe Virginia loves me."

NEXT morning I picked four of my men to work close to me, the ones I wanted for helpers. I sounded them again on their willingness to fight for freedom.

"Very well," I said; "tonight you will have a chance. After all, there is only one man to handle, and I know we will have no opposition from the other gang—at least until we have taken over headquarters; and then we shall have cannon and rifles. After that, the island is ours."

"When we take over the island, then what?" asked one fellow thoughtfully. "How do we get off?"

Here I took a big chance.

"Do any of you know the Crowell line of coastwise vessels?"

"Sure—I worked on one of 'em. It was my own damn' fault I got pickled and lost my job. Crowell is the best-liked ship-owner in the business."



"Exactly—and he is a personal friend of mine," I went on, and plied my imagination a little. "As you know, he was bucking the crooked ring in San Francisco. I'm engaged to be married to his niece. Crowell helped me deposit thirty thousand dollars of my own money in the Seaboard Bank. But he asked me to do a little investigating work to break up a certain clique—and this is where it landed me. I've got all the information I need to break it up—once I get back there. And can you imagine what I wanted you to catch those pigeons for? To send information by! There's almost three hundred chances that some hunter will bag a bird carrying one of my messages—and if it gets to Crowell, we are saved!"

It seemed almost underhanded to work upon their imaginations like that, but loyalty goes largely with admiration.

They looked at me with eyes wide. To a man they swore allegiance. Then I gave them their parts to play, and think about until the hour of attack. As the day wore on, I taught them certain signals and passwords. This kept them keyed up, but secretive. Afterward my father said I was a born general.

Be that as it may, I did depend a lot on what I had committed to memory of Sam Chong's leaves; and in all my reading since of Occidental complication, I have failed to find philosophers equal to the Chinese in analyzing and quaintly classifying situations and human reactions to them.

WHEN darkness came, I started out for the one strategic trick that seldom fails. A fair breeze had come up during the afternoon. I hoped it wouldn't blow too hard. I had picked a route west to the beach-line that would allow me to slip up to the warehouse behind the

thicket of firewood trees. I had been filching sulphur matches from the cook-house for a month, and had a pocketful.

My helpers sneaked up to their posts, and I continued to mine.

The warehouse was a frame affair built of California redwood, with split redwood shakes forming the roof. I hoped we could get back to the fire and put it out before it got going too strong.

In the southwest corner of the building, stacked to the roof, was a great pile of empty jute bags. It was this corner, at the crack between two boards, that I worked on with my knife until I had a hole big enough to wad some paper in and set fire to it. I had to move a batten strip to uncover the crack.

Between the warehouse and Czar Anderson's quarters was a space of about three feet only. A small window opened out against the building—I hoped it was his bedroom window, and at the same time worked in fear and trembling beneath it, scarcely breathing.

The paper lit, I waited until a red streak rocketed to the roof inside, climbing the whiskers of jute in the stack. Then I sneaked around to a position in front and waited some more. It seemed no time until a hissing roar began shattering the stillness.

I will believe to my dying day that I had found the one thing Czar Anderson feared beneath the sun—fire. In quicker time than I hoped for, he dashed out the front on a run, trying to climb into his pants at the same time, and bawling in his foghorn voice that was good as any fire-alarm—bawling the one word: "Fire! Fire! FIRE!" over and over.



I lost no time. . . .
Dodder and his men
fell into the sea as if
plucked off the cat-
walk by invisible
hands.

Taking my cue from him, I took off my shirt to represent a man just being awakened, and yelled the signal my men were waiting for: "Coming, Anderson!"

How we did come! Some one rang the alarm-gong—another of my signals. Father would be taking over Li Wu.

I made a dive for the giant's legs. My helpers swarmed over the top of him. We were like tiny ants attacking a grasshopper, but—we held on.

One of my helpers succeeded in pulling a sack down over his head and tying it round his neck. I kept working at his legs until I had him down. He was not easy to flop on his back; and once he cuffed me alongside the head so that I could see fire in my brain.

Yet we finished our job, and had him hog-tied and gagged.

"We'll lay him out of harm's way and one of you men watch him," I ordered. "We've got to get that fire out."

"Why not let the damn' place burn down?" suggested one.

"For good reasons. We're taking any ship away from here, that lands," I replied. "Captain Yarentz may be the first to pull in, and I don't want him running off without us."

My questioner nodded.

"Sure—I got you."

THEY all understood, and soon there were seventy-five whites and twice as many Chinese attacking the blaze. The Chinese formed an endless chain of bucket-carriers from the sea to the west end of the warehouse, and the white gangs dashed the water on. They worked doggedly, realizing that eventual escape depended on it.

The whole southwest corner had burned out, enabling the fighters to enter after subduing the flames, and topple over the stack of smoldering jute bags. These were carried to the beach and buried under the sand.

Part of the white gang swarmed up onto the roof and corraled the blaze in short order. Two hours from the time I fired the building, not even a smudge could be seen. And we had confined the flames to the west end.

It had got round to all hands that they had been freed from slavery; and now that the island was completely taken over, they wanted to know the particulars. I said to them:

"Go back now to your beds. Tomorrow we will decide what is to be done. The island is taken over; slavery is at an end—but there is work to be done.

You still have bosses, and if any man is dissatisfied with the arrangements, I'll hear him out in the morning."

On the impulse of the occasion they gave us cheers; nevertheless my father and I commandeered the czar's quarters, and shut ourselves in with our prisoners. We took turns sitting up as guard, even though we kept them bound. The mere sight of the big fellow made one all but lose confidence in the ropes that held him. As for Ku Li Wu, we were pretty much in a quandary what to do about him. He had taken no active part in carrying on the slavery. He had devoted his life to a particular science. He had a right to be heard, and by men free of the passion for vengeance.

I TALKED the matter over with Father, and he heard me thoughtfully.

"I'm glad to see, son, that you have no fanatical obsessions, as is the case with many reformers. I've been here twenty years, and have witnessed enough to make me a fanatic. But in the fact that we have taken over without difficulty, I for one can be generous. Talk with him—by all means."

After deciding upon a method of approach, I arranged him comfortably for the hearing. Czar Anderson was also a witness, and before I had uttered a dozen words, he became an intent listener, partly through amazement at my facile Chinese. But no less was Li Wu astonished. It was the first bit of Chinese I had used upon the island; I had been saying it for some such situation. I said:

"Ku Li Wu, the fortunes of war are often the incentive for war. The profits of industry, when they become great, excite greed and envy which, backed by power, are great agencies for changing the directors of industry, political régimes, and history itself. You have just witnessed such a change upon this island. Where does the illustrious Ku Li Wu desire to fit in?"

Wu looked at me a long moment.

"By what miracle," he inquired finally, "does the extremely brilliant person who addresses this lowly worm chance to speak with the tongues of the ancients?"

"By the long, tedious miracle of association, Li Wu. Circumstance compelled me to learn the tongue before I became aware there were other tongues. Let that explanation be sufficient. The régime of this island has changed hands.

The divisions of the spoils are to be settled. What have you to say for yourself?"

Wu shrugged; then he replied:

"Ku Li Wu is passive before the political changes of his surroundings. The greeds, the passions, the ambitions of other humankind are as nothing to him, save pitfalls to avoid. He accepted the opportunity to avoid them by coming here and pursuing his own greed and ambition—which has been for greater knowledge of the poppy. Does he understand that this shifting of authority is simply a shift in the profits as well? Will Ku Li Wu be permitted to continue with his beloved experiments?"

"Let this ignorant person ask a question of his own. What is there so fascinating in the poppy besides its lying vapors that compels so great an interest from the learned Li Wu?"

"If the intelligent questioner is willing to concede merits in the culture of so wondrous a plant as the poppy, if he will simply look beyond the fact of so many weak persons despoiling themselves by intemperate and debauching uses of it, this awkward and blundering inquisitor into natural phenomena will deem it an honor to expound upon the possibilities of the poppy, which, rightly administered and regulated, will one day restore to humankind measures of good fourfold to the amount of evil which morbid persons have brought upon themselves with it. Proceed with any questions you wish answered."

"There are merits, then, to this hideously beautiful plant creature?"

"Merits indeed! Your studious self must certainly be aware of such a noble purpose as medical science. One-twentieth of the entire world population is in a daily state of incapacity through accident and disease. That is far more than the numbers of people seeking the ill effects of the poppy. In poppy-sap there is contained many properties of sedative and even curative value. To the sick upon their backs, to the mangled in agony, the poppy extends a blessing. When applied judiciously, there is no harm from it. One day the demand for its beneficial action will make its intemperate uses seem trivial indeed."

"In just what way has the industrious and productive Li Wu fitted in here in the more harmful dispensing of the sap? Has he exacted a share in the ignominious profits that were obtained by Richard Van Gyle?"

"This person has accepted no such profits. As a student seeking refuge from persecution in his country by a certain society, he settled upon a farm patch in the outskirts of San Francisco, and labored there. To him at that place came the person named with the offer of a pleasant life job experimenting here. It was accepted. Undoubtedly the so-comfortable position has been sustained by questionable profits in uses of the poppy; but if science did not sometimes advance upon the waves of human greed, it would be left to progress much slower. The studies attempted by this humble person of no political ambitions have been recorded. The written papers of Ku Li Wu, he has been informed, now repose in many cabinets and in many languages where medicine is being examined before approved."

I translated all this to my father, who replied thoughtfully:

"Execution of such a man would be unforgivable murder."

I nodded assent.

"What about me?" whined Anderson. "You going to kill me?"

"Have you any scientific reasons to offer for your continued existence?" I demanded coldly.

Under the law of survival, the law which Czar Anderson understood best, disposal of him could be quickly decided and with poetic justice; but my father and I were both reluctant to execute him after the fashion of conquerors. Killing in combat in self-defense is one thing; ordering a death-penalty is another: who were we to take such measures?

MY father, so keenly sensitized to the moral complications of a civilized age, felt obliged to place the island under a form of civil and humane procedure, as he understood it. Now that we were fully masters, he argued, we would be responsible hereafter for our decisions.

"Son," he said, "politically we have become a nationality; else we are savages without a jungle. We are beholden to no government or country for what we do—only to Providence. We can become absolutely lawless without fear of punishment; we can degenerate. If we thus abandon ourselves in the abuse of freedom, we will perish. Freedom cannot be thoroughly enjoyed without observing discipline—nor preserved. Therefore, I suggest that we leave the fate of Czar Anderson in the hands of a selected jury representative of the white forces

of the island. It would hardly hold in any court elsewhere, there being no disinterested people to draw a jury from. Our argument is, emergency under military law until a provisional government is set up."

"Nothing could be fairer," said I. "I don't see how we could be adversely criticized if we put Anderson to death after such a trial. It should be our first consideration."

"And, son, you take the lead. With the class of men we have to govern, a lenient monarchy will be appreciated by them more than a many-voiced republic."

"But Father, you are the older, more in line for the job than I."

"Nevertheless, you take the job. Our relationship as father and son need not be known. I'll be your silent partner."

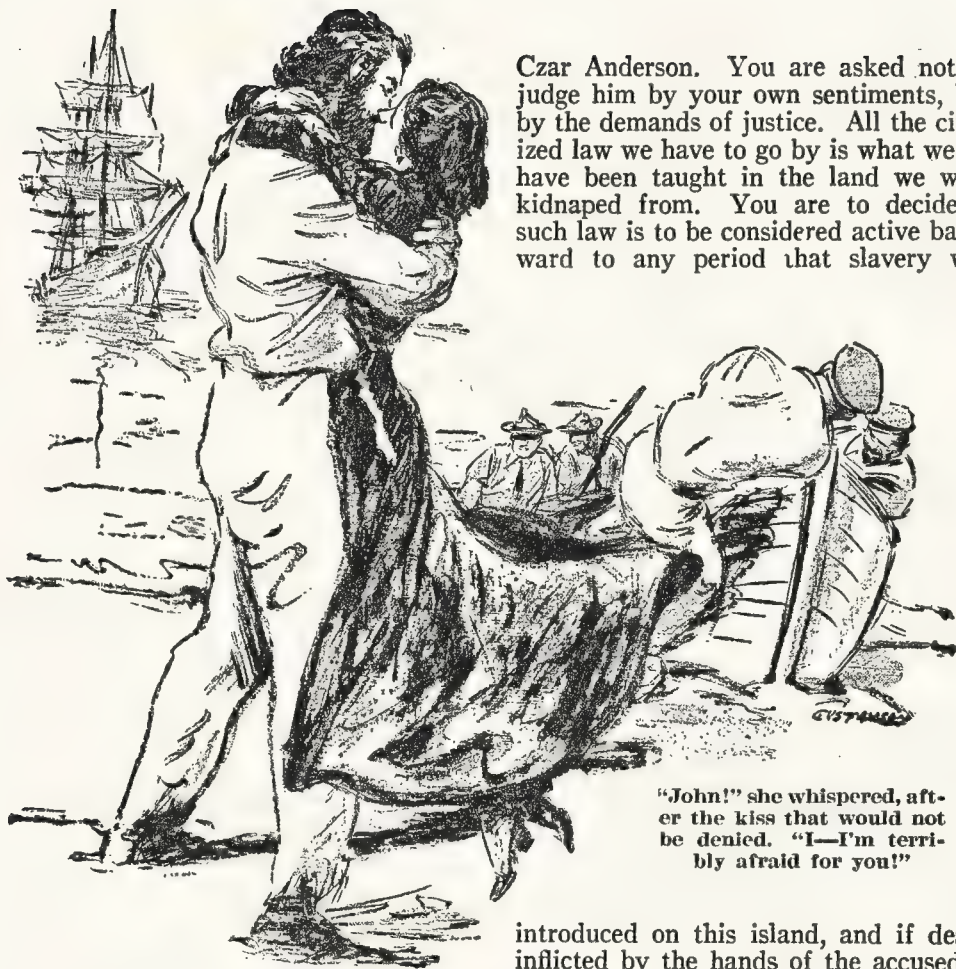
AFTER breakfast I assembled all the whites and Chinese. I talked first to the white gangs in a way they completely understood. Before they had time to consider, however, I turned to the Chinese and gave them a version in their own language, the first time I had spoken it publicly; and the effect was all that could be desired on yellow and white alike. A real leader must have something of showmanship in his make-up, a knack of mystifying his followers. As a result, both races cheered me.

The trial followed quickly. I picked as intelligent men as the gangs offered, to fill the jury. My father acted impartially as prosecutor and defense counsel both—that is to say, he simply recited instances in the past twenty years in which the accused had made war ruthlessly against men he ruled over as a slave-driver, or killed and caused to be killed workers who were no longer able to slave. He picked at random three men whose testimony corroborated him.

Then he argued. Possibly no attorney has ever been placed in such a position. He first brought out one trait of the giant which he endeavored to modify with another. In the main, he convinced everybody, I think, that retaliation was not the object of any punishment meted out. And then he left me, presiding as judge, to conclude the trial.

First I asked Anderson if he had anything to say in his own defense.

Sweat had kept oozing out of the giant's brow as he listened to the proceedings. When I offered him a chance to speak, he broke down and cried like a baby. His hardihood was just a pose.



Czar Anderson. You are asked not to judge him by your own sentiments, but by the demands of justice. All the civilized law we have to go by is what we all have been taught in the land we were kidnaped from. You are to decide if such law is to be considered active backward to any period that slavery was

"John!" she whispered, after the kiss that would not be denied. "I—I'm terribly afraid for you!"

"If you're going to hang me," he said, "you get Dick Van Gyle too. I'll tell you all about him. He tricked me out of my gambling-house, and held me to a debt, but offered me this job. I—I'm no good at hard work and had to take it."

"Will you put in writing all you know of Richard Van Gyle's connection with kidnaping wholesale for the purpose of obtaining slave labor?"

"Will—will turning State's evidence keep me from hanging?"

"No!" I said promptly. "But it will get you an hour to write down what you know."

The miserable exponent of the law of survival demonstrated his greed for life by yielding to the bargain. The document he wrote and signed would be a valuable bit of evidence against the author of my father's, mother's, and my own wrongs, should we ever need it. It has never been out of my possession.

Now I turned to instruct the jury. I said to them:

"You have heard the evidence brought against the accused, known to you as

introduced on this island, and if death inflicted by the hands of the accused is murder. You are to decide that, if this is murder, is the accused to pay the penalty with his own life, or is he to be held for trial with certain other individuals implicated in the testimony back in the States. Life has never been considered a very sacred possession on this island up until now. It is for you to decide how sacred to our future the life of the accused is, and for the rest of us to abide by the decision. That is all."

The jury did not leave our presence to arrive at their decision. Without passion, but with solemn regard for their appointed mission, they voted: "Guilty." I just as solemnly pronounced the sentence, then and there.

I gave Anderson a day's grace, but commissioned six strong men to hang him at the end of that time. This was done next morning in the warehouse, where the overhead beams were strong enough for his weight.

I KEPT Li Wu under surveillance, and when opportunity afforded, I had him show me his scientific reports on the opium poppy. They were a revelation

as to the universality of scientific endeavor. Isolated though he was, he had sent out yearly reports by boat to be forwarded his society in the Orient, and perhaps a year to eighteen months later he had received replies and awards. He was really a scientist, but a cold-blooded one. He had taken human subjects from the China gang to experiment on, recording each case by number, with the effects of certain derivatives, which in some cases resulted in actual death.

But there was no doubt of some value in his discoveries. And it was not my mission to judge him. I simply shuddered at some of the things I read, and have kept them to myself.

WITH Czar Anderson's overthrow, execution, and a provisional government established and placed on record, I now turned my attention to work. The new régime did not stop work, as I made plain to white and yellow alike. I hoped for early release which could only come through a ship's arrival; we were strictly on our own now, and lying down to wait would be inviting disaster.

In the warehouse insulated to keep provisions were sacks of potatoes, beans, rice, wheat, corn and other staples which could be used for seed. I set the China gang to tearing up a poppy field and sowing it to these staples.

My first impulse had been to destroy every poppy plant on the island, and then I remembered they would be needed to decoy a ship to anchor, presumably the *Pacific Rose*. It was several months since she had left with a cargo of "dried vegetables."

So I left the fields nearest to headquarters, standing. I had the white gang repair the warehouse with lumber on the dock, leaving my father to superintend the job while I did some roaming over the island. I saw a place on the iron cliff along the north shore to allow for coast defense, and there I had a dugout made for the brass cannon. A man who claimed to have been a field-gunner in the Civil War assisted in sighting the cannon, and as there was plenty of gunpowder in the arsenal, dry in black cans, I let him practice a few times at a raft towed out to where the ships generally anchored, and gave him custody of the cannon.

Realizing that the island headquarters was a bad place in which to withstand bombardment from a ship, I had the old reservoir cleaned out and fixed up with a shelter and a storehouse, and had the

bulk of the foodstuffs and all rifles and ammunition stationed there. I transferred the arsenal lock to the new place, and kept the key on my own person.

I had a small shelter built on top of the highest peak and posted a lookout there daily for ships. Czar Anderson had been provided with a high-grade telescope that came in very handy.

My father looked over all my preparations and pronounced them good.

"The Elwin genius, my son, shows prominently in all that you do—a genius for military advantage and strategy," he said. "All of this, of course, will not be necessary if your friend Crowell reaches here first. But should it be the *Pacific Rose* and Captain Yarentz—"

We had discussed the possibility before; hence the elaborateness of preparation. The weak spot in our plans was in coaxing the *Pacific Rose* up to anchor. Here is where we decided to use Bloch. Either my father or I would excite suspicion. Bloch had been boss a long time, and he had taken our régime with good grace. He did what was told, and never grumbled.

He was to meet the shore party first sent over the catwalk, inform them of Anderson's death by sickness, and that he, Bloch, had inherited the czar's job.

It was weak, but it would have to do. Failing with that, we would have to put the ship out of commission anyway, and make the best of it. . . .

One day about three o'clock, afternoon, the lookout reported a sail. His report being previously ordered to be given in secret, my father and I climbed the peak and remained there until sundown.

By that time it had come just near enough so that we could make out with the telescope a big *P* and a big *R*. But it was the painted flower following the letters that identified her.

She was a prize to be fought for with might, passion and strategy. She represented passage back to the land we all loved and hungered for—and for me, passage back to my mother, to Virginia!

CHAPTER XV

"TO lay a trap, study the spider; to feed an army, spy on the ant; to achieve a victory, copy the eagle—to insure defeat, harbor a traitor!" said Mo Sen Yat, a great general in the early Ming dynasty.

We had laid our trap and provided for every contingency, even the worst. There was much that Ely Bloch didn't know about prearranged signals. All night we had kept lights for Yarentz to guide by as he stood off shore.

I stationed myself behind a rock with the spyglass before daylight, beside a Chinese dinner gong. Through the glass I saw Yarentz on the bridge with his glass. There seemed to be no more than the usual numbers of the crew on deck. I was high enough up, however, to see the arrangement of the deck, and I noticed particularly several tarpaulin-covered bulges at the gunwales. As the ship drifted closer, I made out the bulges to be cannon!

My crew of boatmen at the beach waited for the hawser. Presently there was a puff of smoke, and it came. The crew were upon it with tow-line, and Chinamen at the dock capstan did their work just as if Czar Anderson were still alive and his régime in working order.

The *Pacific Rose* paid out her anchor, then sent her first catwalk ashore. All the time Captain Yarentz remained in one spot, his eyes never away from his glass. For some reason, thought I, he was unduly suspicious. Those cannon aboard had a meaning—and then it dawned on me. Those messages! The pigeons had reached the mainland!

And so the *Pacific Rose* had been sent out prepared for battle. Yet, if all went well, she would be our prize—with all her cannon. . . .

Dodder, the first mate, came ashore with four men. Bloch met them. I observed the meeting through my glass. I needed no device to tell my ears what his lips were saying, nor what the raising of Dodder's eyebrows meant. Bloch had decided to cast his lot with crime. He deliberately sold out our plans.

Dodder turned and headed his men back for the ship, Bloch following. So anxious was he, that he kept right at Dodder's heels.

I LOST no time in thought. "*Bong!*" my club sounded on the gong. Dodder, his men, and our traitor fell into the sea as if plucked off the catwalk by invisible hands. "*Bong! Bong!*" The boom of my one artillery-piece was echoed by a shell exploding at the foot of the forward mast.

Out came a swarm of men on deck with rifles, and some without rifles tore away the canvas and began swinging

deck cannon round to answer. I signaled again, and a volley from .45-90 Springfields mowed the deck force down like poppy stems. Another, and another of my gunner's shells wrought havoc with more of the ship's rigging. She was helplessly crippled now, and all we need do was keep snipers busy worrying any attempt at repairs.

Under cover of our fire our China gang and unarmed whites beat an orderly retreat back around the iron cliffs. I signaled again, and called in the riflemen led by my father. I had two rifles and snapped a shot out of each at men on deck. My gunner, above me, helped out with grape-shot until all our men, without a single casualty, were back under cover of the peak.

MY father stopped a moment at my post, disappointment on his face.

"Can't be helped, son. The worst enemy of any cause is a traitor; and like the poor they are ever with us. What is your plan now?"

"To keep Yarentz from putting to sea until we can think of one," said I. "I'll have my best riflemen keep him worried. He won't dare hoist anchor and risk dashing against the rocks. The ship is in a bad way, too, if a wind comes up. I don't think it will be long before Yarentz will send a truce party ashore. There seems to be some one aboard ship with the captain. I saw him in the cabin."

My father took the glass. After a long, careful scrutiny, he announced with ill-suppressed agitation:

"Richard Van Gyle is aboard that ship—and that must mean Edith is too—your mother!"

That contingency was one I had not thought of—the White Boss, himself, putting out for the island. I made no answer, but took the glass for myself. The glass front of the captain's cabin seemed almost within reach. Through it, I could see the sun shining on two anxious faces, one the Captain's, the other a tall, lean man of small, handsome but crafty features. He was well dressed, and I caught the gleam of a shiny stone on his scarf front.

I gave the glass back to my father.

"Watch," said I, "and see what happens."

I loaded a rifle, raised my sight, and aimed at the small patch of glass. It was a long range, and I was inexperienced, but Father exclaimed:

THE REVOLT OF THE WHITE ONE

"Wonderful shooting—shattered glass over their heads! But you won't have another chance. They've ducked elsewhere to do their worrying. Look out—here comes a cannon-ball!"

Some one had fired one of the deck cannon, and the shell exploded against the cliff below us, kicking up a shower of rock particles.

"Time for us to join our forces behind the hill," said I; and together we scrambled out of hiding, called our gunner, and made ourselves hard to hit by a rifle-ball. Three cannon were fired at us, but too haphazardly to find our range. We reached safety, and held a council of war.

"Even though Bloch sold us out," I offered, "none of his information got aboard ship. Captain Yarentz doesn't know how things are with us. He may know the extent of our supplies, that we are in shape to stand a long siege. He may suspect they are all in the warehouses, however—we can tell if he starts bombarding them with cannon. Our best move is to wait for his next move. He'll try desperately to send men ashore, I think. We'll let him do it, and just watch."

"If we could capture the shore party," suggested Father, "we would weaken the ship's forces, and compel the ship to surrender. The captain is licked, and I believe he knows it."

THIS was good reasoning to offer in the hearing of our anxious followers, anyway, and I took his cue and added more optimistic suppositions. Finally I took a loaded rifle, a belt of ammunition and three good men with me. We climbed to a position on the north peak where we could look safely down on the ship. We had the ship in our range, but it is doubtful if a rifle-ball could be directed upward at that angle and distance with any telling effect.

A large force had appeared on deck now, and gunners were training cannon at the buildings. Presently the bombardment started. Fire burst out in the warehouse and destroyed it completely. Shells smashed through it and reduced Czar Anderson's headquarters to a heap. Under this fire a wary force of riflemen came ashore on the catwalk, and men behind them dragged another catwalk sling.

The rifle force dodged immediately under shelter of the rocks behind which our forces had taken first blood. I

judged from the nervousness of these men that they must have been offered a large bonus inducement to expose themselves thus.

WHEN four catwalks were laid, the riflemen advanced up the hill to new positions, and presently a gang of some thirty Chinese slaves began the work of packing black, shiny cans to the hill on their shoulders. They came part way up the hill on the northwest side, and then a force of whites with picks, shovels, and bars came ashore and made their way up the hill to a point about a hundred feet below the peak, about three hundred feet from where my men and I were stationed. They set feverishly to work at digging holes in the soil. Their purpose was all too plain—an ambitious attempt to blow the top of the peaks off so they could not be seen from any charted position on the sea!

This meant that Van Gyle feared pursuit. Perhaps there were ships already on the way. If they could not sight the peaks they would never find the island. It was up to us to keep that boatload of powder from landing.

I hesitated doing anything rash, however, until I consulted with Father. I left a watcher and took the rest of the men back with me.

"Yes, they will have to be stopped; but a good way is to let them bring a good lot of it ashore, then attack them and set off their powder. If half the supply is destroyed, they'll give it up. It would take a full cargo of powder to move either of the peaks, I'd think."

This seemed good reasoning; so I went back and signaled to the last watcher to join me on the second peak, a long rifle-shot from the line of powder carriers. They were working fast, and evidently hoped we were watching. Also, men had got busy making repairs to the ship's rigging. I could see reasoning now in all that was being done. The White Boss wished it to be known to us about the dangerous cargo he had on board. With the woman aboard whom he had striven so elaborately to have for himself, we would be careful how we fired upon that ship.

No; I couldn't endanger the ship. Therefore, while there was not enough powder ashore to damage the ship if we set it off, I decided to discourage any more of it being landed.

Accordingly I raised my rifle and drew a bead just ahead of the last man climb-

ing the hill, aiming to kick up dust. As it happened, more dust, rocks, and mangled human beings were kicked off the earth by that shot than by any other rifle-ball ever sent on a mission of warning. As near as I could reason afterward, the last man dropped his can of powder from fright—revealing tragically the nature of that particular powder.

Black powder, such as those cans represented, would not have exploded from dropping. But about that year or sooner a tricky kind of powder had come onto the market for use on hard rock—dynamite. Its compound made it strictly dangerous to handle under any conditions. I used to see quantities of it in mining camps, used by whites, never by Chinamen, for the Chinese preferred their own black powder when they had use for an explosive.

Dynamite usually came in sticks, and not cans. Evidently Dick Van Gyle had known what he was doing in buying a shipload of dynamite put up in black-powder cans. It fooled his gang of Chinese—else, they'd have mutinied.

When the rearmost packer dropped his treacherous load, it was *boom, boom, boom* on up to the end of the line, the last to go being the collection of cans waiting to be buried. The sky rained magnetic iron for several seconds afterward, many of the fragments coming uncomfortably close.

When I did venture to look again, there was nothing but a chain of small craters up the hillside marking where each packer had reached in his ascent. A kind of nausea came over me.

SCATTERING riflemen, some crippled, were running, crawling, rising and stumbling inland away from the scene. I sat too stunned, myself, to make a move. White-faced, my father came running up to me.

"What in God's name happened? The ship didn't go?"

"I—I fired to discourage more powder coming ashore, and I think I did," said I. "That's blasting compound for mining they brought in. The ship is all right, I guess."

"Thank God for that! But it makes the situation more precarious. What can we do now?"

I had no answer to that question.

"I don't think Van Gyle can get any powder packers now," I ventured after a bit. "There seems to be dissension on board. All the survivors of their armed

forces are coming ashore—quitting the ship as if it had the plague."

I gave him the glass.

"Evidently they don't want the ship as a gift," he observed.

THE leaderless quitters seemed to be every man for himself. They were armed, and lit out for shelter behind the grove of firewood trees. That they were actually deserting the *Pacific Rose* was made plain in the shots fired at them by the remaining ship force, which was of unknown strength. Some fifty men were in the bunch that deserted. They were joined by the shore stragglers, including a badly depleted China gang.

These refugees seemed to be obeying only the primitive laws of self-preservation and survival. Several of them dropped under the useless but murderous fire from the ship. The rest did not stop to give aid.

Undoubtedly the deserters must have feared our forces would blow the ship up—another point in favor of the idea that the *Pacific Rose* had been followed.

Father and I compared ideas.

"Yes, son; it looks very much as if your friends have responded to your call for help. It would be well to keep a signal-fire burning tonight. In the meantime, we could get in touch with the deserters and try uniting their forces with ours. Undoubtedly they were paid gunfighters who didn't know the nature of that powder. They'll soon be hungry, and glad to have us intercede for them when help reaches us. But—Edith is still aboard that ship, son. We have that to think of—whatever we do."

It was a situation where the three factions of us now were dead-locked with an equal number of advantages and disadvantages on our several sides. Van Gyle and Captain Yarentz, and no great force besides, faced annihilation in the first strong wind to rise. In addition to being dashed on the rocks, the vessel would be blown off the face of the sea from the jar to her remaining blasting-powder cargo. It was truly a problem.

"The one place in all our plans we slipped up in," said I bitterly, "is where we failed to haul a small-boat around under this peak on the east shore. We had three of them. Like as not, they've been sunk by falling rocks from that blast. If we had one, I'd attempt going aboard ship tonight with a couple of men, and trust to the fortunes of battle there."



"I would be one of the men to go, son," my father replied quietly.

A commotion behind us called our attention to a number of our men coming up the trail. They gesticulated and pointed south, and presently we saw. Beyond the low volcanic cone, four towering masts, stripped of most of their sails, were standing in toward the land. Slowly they maneuvered under the lee of the island ridge, unseen by any possible chance from the *Pacific Rose*, and evidently holding the course to remain unseen.

My men were anxious over it, but I was not the least apprehensive. Only Captain Binks could know enough about the island to maneuver in that fashion.

I reassured our forces, and set out for the south promontory. I trained my glass upon the vessel and made out the name: *Sword of Orion*.

As his rifle came up, I caught it in a flying jerk.

Captain Crowell's own sailing yacht, converted from the square-rigger with which he had plied the Seven Seas!

CHAPTER XVI

AS the *Sword of Orion* drew nearer, I began wishing for some means of communicating to her commander the situation on the island, and on the *Pacific Rose*. I had read of methods by which Chinese military scouts had kept the main body behind them informed of the country ahead, by smoke-signals and sun-reflections, but I had learned no system of conveying a language that way.

I talked it over with my father.

"If some man among us only knew the semaphore!" he said. "Almost every shipmaster, I imagine, must know that oldest method of communication between ships. I never committed the alphabet to memory. We can at least inquire." We called all the company to attention; and fortunately, among our forces was a sailor who had once been a first mate in first-class maritime service.

"If it would please you, I can try the ship for a wigwag," he said, when my father asked for a man who knew signals.

I stood beside him and wrote down what I wanted sent. He sent out a call to the ship, repeating it until Father spied a man in the ship's prow answering. Our signaler took the glass and read off the answer. Then he took my message and wigwagged it across. For this purpose he had made two hasty flags with sticks through the bands of two hats.

He stood by with the glass to read the answer:

"Captain Crowell—Captain Binks. One hundred and fifty soldiers from the Presidio. Government man. Working under international agreement of pursuing piracy on the high seas. Captain Crowell and eleven men coming ashore. They are weighing anchor now."

CAPTAIN CROWELL was the first out of the boat, and we shook hands at the water's edge.

"My boy! It is good to see you again. And this is your father? Delighted to meet you! Man, you have a life of compensation coming to you for what you have suffered! But you have been the means of ridding San Francisco of a vice-leader who had planned a monarchy of his own on the Pacific Coast. The ring is broken now, and we hope to stop the opium traffic. How long have you been in control here?"

I told him briefly. Then I asked about the messages sent by pigeon.

"That was a clever stunt, my boy, but Van Gyle must have got wind of it before it was published. In all, three messages were picked up by hunters in the coast hills, and in the Sierras. They created plenty of excitement, I can tell you, and I prepared for the sea immediately. I put the case before the Federal agent in San Francisco and got the charter to hunt pirates. Colonel Yost at the Presidio, a good friend of mine, furnished

me with soldiers and fighting equipment. What are your plans?"

"That lifeboat has put me in mind of the plan I had to discard," said I: "the attempt at boarding the *Pacific Rose* to-night. I was thinking of rowing under cover of darkness to the seaward side of her and climbing aboard with all the men I could take with me. I don't think there are many of the ship's crew left on her."

"That's quite a contract, my boy."

"Not when my mother is on that ship with him," I said.

"Your mother? Oh—yes." He looked away. "Besides your mother, there are bank funds amounting to a quarter of a million with him, one or two private club treasuries, not to mention his own personal fortune, that he has converted into solid cash. A prize ship, boy! Let's talk over this plan of yours and see what we can do to strengthen it."

WE did—the three of us. Every detail was covered to the smallest item.

"It sounds like the only solution to me," he agreed soberly. "I'll go back aboard and send you such stuff as you will need."

I followed him to the boat, and for once my voice almost failed me.

"How is—your niece—Miss Crowell?"

"My niece? Great guns, man—haven't you got your tongue around her first name yet? She threatened mutiny because I wouldn't let her come ashore. You've no idea how we've all felt since you failed to show up after leaving my office that morning! But I'll leave her to tell the story."

When the boat was sent back, three very welcome faces greeted my hungry eyes. First came Virginia, who simply came to my arms with a force as irresistible as any magnetism on the island.

"John!" she whispered after the kiss that could not be denied. "I—I'm terribly afraid for you!"

"I'll not fail, dear. I couldn't—now."

The other two welcome faces were that of Sam Lee and Loo Chung. I gripped hands with them and heard out their pleas. They spoke in Chinese.

"If the White One will condescend to grant us the pleasure for which we hunger unworthily, we would go with you, one on your right hand and one on your left, and die in the cause which has been our common grief," said Sam Lee. "To deny us, will forever take life's joy from us. And this unworthy person presumes

to recall to the Illustrious White One the oath we took together—over* the body of my murdered father. It was the Unseeable White Boss who sped the death bullet into his heart, and we know for certain the name of him now.”

It was not for me to deny such a plea, nor repudiate that solemn oath taken over the body of old Sam Chong, who had given me the best possible start in life in spite of his part in my long imprisonment. I slapped each affectionately on the shoulder, and declared them my right- and left-hand lieutenants in the coming venture.

I set men to work now on the equipment sent ashore; this consisted of long, slender poles that would reach from a rowboat to the gunwales of a ship riding as low in the water as did the *Pacific Rose*. Father and I had guessed at a large cargo of supplies for the island where Van Gyle probably figured on setting up a piracy refuge, or else he just intended going on with his opium traffic in other ports.

On one end of the poles, wide, heavy hooks were fastened, and thick spikes were driven in the wood for hand-grips and treads. . . .

Just at dark Captain Crowell and Captain Binks both came ashore, and the plans were enlarged upon.

Captain Crowell suggested sending soldiers over to the mutiny bunch on the west shore and engaging in a battle.

“The soldiers came for fight, and they’d be fighting mad if we didn’t give ’em some of it to do,” he added. “The commotion will attract attention from the ship while you are climbing aboard her.”

“Fine!” said I. “If you can time it to coincide with my journey from the time I sight the ship until I reach it—”

“We’ll have another boat follow you and signal us just as you sight the ship. Lights will be necessary, but they must not be seen from the *Rose*. Our whole fighting forces can go over and take the mutineers—maybe effect a surrender without bloodshed. But there can be plenty of noise.”

THIS being decided, I put my boatload of men through a drill, and then we set out. The oars were wrapped with canvas, the locks muffled. Three good oarsmen kept the boat moving silently. I let Sam Lee take the prow with his boarding pole; I sat in the center with mine; and Loo Chung had the stern.

As soon as we reached the point where lights on the *Pacific Rose* became visible, we let the boat following come up alongside, and I gave them the sign to go back and signal. The night was utterly black, a thin mist partially obscuring the stars.

When the signal had passed, I gave orders for full speed. Oars plunged into the water with scarcely a sound. That little was drowned by the splash of the waves against the shore. Crouched low, we put to sea in a wide semicircle, coming in from that side.

DISTANTLY, through the boom of the waves, came the sudden crack of rifles. While it was still a novelty, we quickly drew in by the ship’s side, our oarsmen deftly stopping under the lowest sag of the deck. Up went our three poles, hooked, and each of us with a pistol in one hand, scrambled over, followed by a soldier apiece. The oarsmen remained behind.

Captain Yarentz and his second mate, each with a rifle in his hands, stood guarding the catwalks. The battle was still on in the center of the island.

“The fat one is mine,” I said. “Take the other, Sam; the rest of you rush the cabins.”

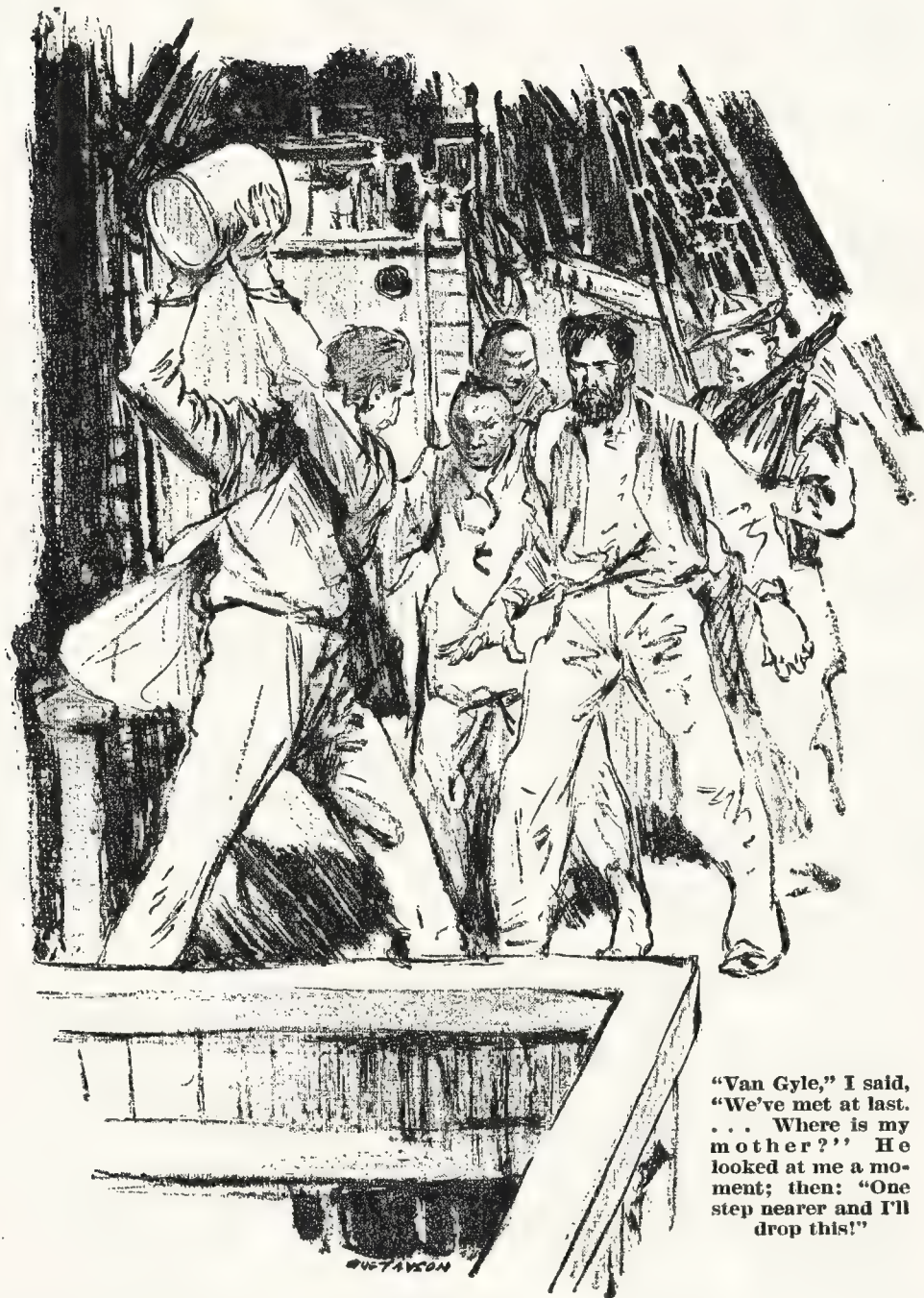
Both the captain and mate wheeled at my words, rifles spitting with startled action upon their triggers. I know not where the bullets went. My pistol flamed in his face, but it was a running shot, and only creased his cheek as he ducked. As his rifle came up, I caught it in a flying jerk, stunned him with a blow of my clubbed pistol, grabbed him by the legs while he wobbled, and heaved him over the side.

I don’t know how many men came down the side deck to meet us, but they looked like some of the most desperate toughs in the world. Sam had finished with the second mate. A bullet felt hot along the side of my hip. I saw Sam go for a ruffian with a knife—a great gash in a throat. I clubbed a snarling fellow senseless.

Shots were being fired elsewhere. Soldiers came down the side deck, and the trapped gunmen fell fast.

Fighting ended as suddenly as it began. All that were left seemed to be of our own forces, but there were other cabins, and then there were the holds.

Suddenly a voice cried threateningly: “Get off this ship, or I’ll blow us all to hell!”



"Van Gyle," I said, "We've met at last. . . . Where is my mother?" He looked at me a moment; then: "One step nearer and I'll drop this!"

Instinctively I knew that must be the White Boss, Richard Van Gyle. I turned to face a desperate figure in the cabin's light aft, poised above an open hatch with a black can in his hands. With horror came back the picture of what had happened that afternoon when such a can had dropped.

In the same instant I took the measure of the man—a face worn with worry and dissipation: the face of one crowded to defeat. The last act of his life would be suicide—if he could take others with him.

I studied the upraised can and deliberately edged nearer.

"Van Gyle, you are the White Boss who had me kidnaped—who killed Sam Lee's father when he was about to tell me your name. We've met at last. It is too bad my father can't meet you."

"Get off this ship, I said!"

"Where is my mother?"

He looked at me a moment; then:

"One step nearer, and I'll drop this! There are two tons of dynamite down in that hold."

"You can't drop that can hard enough to do any hurt," I said. "You may drop it, anyway."

"Damn you!" he hissed, and hurled the can straight at me. I crooked an elbow to receive it, and the can rolled over the side—to float on the water.

"You couldn't have held a fifty-pound weight so lightly, and for so long a time," I explained to him.

He backed away from me now, and I edged nearer. My force had gathered behind me, and I signaled for them to go round the hatch and trap him. I saw a real resolve settle upon his face, and I made a flying leap to intercept his head-long dive into the hold.

I crashed against him and clung on. From all sides he was seized, and flopped at last upon his back like a spent turtle.

"Now," said I, "tell me quickly where you have got my mother. What part of the ship is she on?"

The way Van Gyle looked at me caused me a wave of apprehension. She was not on that ship! His eyes told me so before he spoke.

"I guess you're entitled to know," he said with a calm resumption of what must have been his front before the world. "I tried to win her and failed. I tried to break her spirit, and I only drove her to suicide."

"You lie! Where is she? Tell me before I choke it out of you."

I had straddled him where he lay, my fingers hungry to throttle him.

"I'm telling you the—the truth, you Elwin brat! I shouldn't have kept you alive. She is gone now—by her own hand. When you failed to answer that Polly-Eddy ad you thought you were so clever about, she went somewhere and died. She left me a note. Now, damn you, that's the truth—and make what you can of it!"

I had to believe him. All joy in the capture turned to ashes inside me.

I got to my feet. "We have taken him alive," I said. "Let him stand trial for his crimes."

But as I gave those orders, I had to fight back a primitive passion to crush out his life in my fingers.

CHAPTER XVII

ALMOST in time to witness Van Gyle's capture came a boarding-party consisting of my father, Captain Crowell and Ellis Hamilton, the Federal man.

"Looks like we're too late for anything but the finish," said Captain Crowell.

I nodded without speaking, my throat choked with emotion. I felt compelled to keep silent for the time being—I could not plunge the knife of grief into my father's heart as suddenly as it had been plunged into mine. I would tell him when we were alone.

Van Gyle had been lifted to his feet. As if compelled by a will greater than his own, he faced my father. Sometime in the past they had been roommates in a hall of learning. Some bond of fellowship had drawn them together in youth.

IT held me momentarily in its fascinating grip, this drama of my father and his friend facing each other after twenty years, over a barrier of repeated wrongs that no man should be ever required to forgive. I watched the workings of my father's noble features as he looked into the embittered, defeated countenance of the unscrupulous dope-seller and gambler. But Father had but these words to say:

"Dick, I, for one, am willing to let the law take its course with you, but there are many others. I don't presume to speak for them."

Father then turned his back, and I never saw him look at the prisoner again.

With the Federal agent conducting a search, Van Gyle's treasure was located. In cash and negotiable bonds the cache yielded nine hundred and seventy-seven thousand dollars. A third of that was embezzled funds. The rest came from his various illicit businesses.

"The prize seems to be yours, Mr. Elwin," said Hamilton.

"How so?"

"Fortunes of war, a conquest over which I have no legal jurisdiction. My commission is for apprehending and punishing piracy on the high seas. I can't force you to give up any of this money."

"But I have no wish to keep anything which Van Gyle has embezzled from other people," said I. "Such claims as are legitimate and can be proven when we reach San Francisco, I'll gladly pay."

A party of curious soldiers at their ease opened a hatch at hearing moaning sounds down beneath, and let up a dozen shanghai victims in a pitiful state of sickness and mal-nourishment. These, with four prisoners, we took back with us. . . .

My head seemed bobbing on the waves of an emotional sea by the time we

reached the *Sword of Orion*. And then I saw—my mother and Virginia, arm-in-arm together!

"Mother! You—you didn't—Van Gyle said you—" I gasped breathlessly.

"Did he—tell you that? But of course he would—believing the note I left him," she said. "I resolved to break away from him when you didn't answer my notices in the papers. I prepared him to believe that I would do away with myself, sometime when I could stand no more. But I went directly to your wonderful friends—and they took me in."

"Friends, nothing! They're relatives," I exclaimed, and then I looked for Captain Crowell's grinning face.

"Uncle, you and I are going to have a private quarrel for this!" I threatened.

"I had to do it, John—all that money aboard ship. When you told me your plans of boarding the *Pacific Rose*, I decided not to tell you about your mother coming with us. Your mind would be keener for your job if you thought her still with Van Gyle. . . . And I had another motive. Your mother is none too strong—she has been through long years of anxiety. Her meeting with your father—her husband so long given up for dead—was a terrific emotional shock, even though a very happy one. And I therefore thought it wise, on her account, to defer her reunion with you."

"WILL Your Majesty condescend to grant some time to the affairs of your magnetically misguiding realm?" Captain Crowell bantered next morning.

With an inward shudder I realized what would be required of me.

"Legality and technicality are cogs in legal machinery that must mesh just right, or there is the very devil to pay. With Hamilton to help, we have rigged up a makeshift recognition of your little empire here for the sake of disposing of one Van Gyle. We would like your presence in the cabin for consultation."

I went with him, and found my father with the rest awaiting me. It was Hamilton who addressed me.

"In dealing with this case, I am entirely sympathetic with you, and therefore I am throwing all my help as an advisor your way. It is a highly technical problem to consider if we leave it to the home government, but I have no jurisdiction over any laws you might devise for the good of your empire. Per-

sonally, I feel that Richard Van Gyle deserves hanging—but for what? Kidnaping? Opium-smuggling? Robbery? Should we try him here?"

AT some length we discussed the matter. God knows what our decision would have been, but we were interrupted by the entrance of an excited sailor announcing a commotion on shore. And shortly afterward we learned that Van Gyle had solved our problem for us. With the other three prisoners he had overpowered his guards and succeeded in making his escape to one of the small-boats drawn up on shore. But the sea is a stern custodian. Their boat was swamped in the surf and ebb tide, and the undertow carried them forever beyond our ken. . . .

We remained long enough on the island with my "subjects" to destroy the poppy fields, and bury the cargo of dynamite still left, between the two iron peaks. Plenty of fuse was attached so that our ships would have time to get clear away when the explosion occurred. A crew of sailors, carpenters and riggers put the *Pacific Rose* in commission again, and I ended the affair by an act I deemed obligatory upon me, and which won spontaneous expressions of gratitude from the men who had been lifted from despondency to self-confidence and ambition again—I paid off the Imperial Army of the Island of Poppies. . . .

On the bridge of the *Pacific Rose*, I stood with my arms about my loved ones, gazing at the iron peaks in suspense. Abreast of us on the *Sword of Orion* Captain Crowell and his party, including Virginia, watched in the same thrall of expectancy.

"Be misery what it may, there is compensation to meet it," I asserted.

"What great philosopher says that?" demanded Father.

"John Elwin, Junior."

Presently the island gave us a farewell salute. The needle peaks rose in a mass of fragments, but lumping together again as the magnetism in the particles exerted its force. It was a spectacular sight, but I doubt if the island was damaged greatly.

Then I borrowed the glass from Captain Binks and trained it on my beloved, waving to me from the deck of the yacht—and as I gazed across at her happy face, wondered how I would survive a fashionable church wedding.

THE END.

Shanghai Explosive

By

WILLIAM MAKIN

*A brief but vivid drama
of China today.*

IT is, perhaps, the most astonishing feature of living China: the disposal of the dead. Travel in the Shanghai Express, and the landscape is a whirling, dusty graveyard, the humps of earth telling their own tale.

Skipper Jake Blystone was thinking only of the living and his particular burly self when he presented a check to the moon-spectacled Chinese clerk behind the grille of the Anglo-American Bank in Shanghai. Expressionless, the clerk eyed the check, the dirty-white-suited figure, and then his yellow fingers pushed a wad of notes through the grille.

"One thousand—five—ten thousand dollars," counted Jake Blystone.

"A nice little sum, Blystone," drawled a voice at his elbow.

The skipper of the freighter *Maureen* turned a scowling and weathered face toward the voice. It came from a khaki-clad officer of the Shanghai police.

"Ah, Captain Carruthers! Didn't expect to see you here."

"I'm sure you didn't. What about a drink?"

"Now that's just too bad. There's a shipping-agent I promised—"

"I must insist, Blystone."

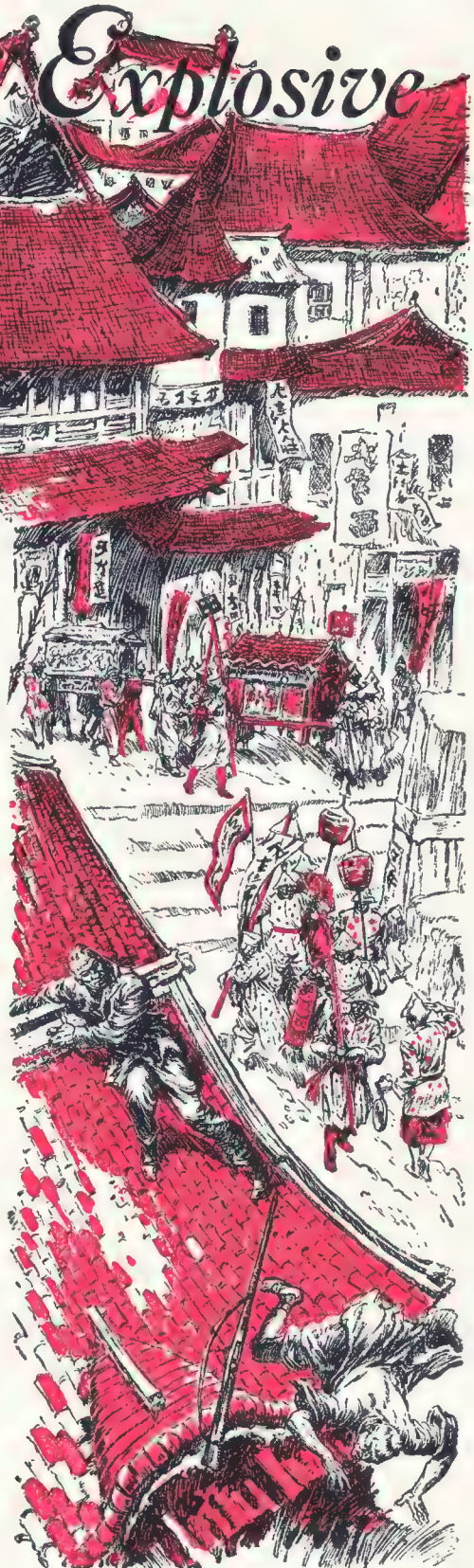
The skipper went a shade pale beneath his tan.

"Okay! Where's the pub?"

"That's better," drawled Carruthers.

"I know a quiet place near by where we can talk without interruption."

But it seemed Jake Blystone was in anything but a talkative mood. He sea-



With a whine of agony, Tao Chen doubled, swayed—and the next moment plunged into the square beneath.

rolled the pavement alongside the sun-helmeted officer, and only opened his mouth to curse an importuning rickshaw coolie.

"HERE is the place," encouraged Carruthers, diving into a doorway over which hung a sign in Chinese characters. He led the way to a room where tables and chairs cluttered the floor, and the windows gave out upon the Bund and the congestion of junks, sampans and freighters riding the slight swell of the Yellow Sea.

"Fascinating panorama, eh?" nodded Carruthers. "What's your poison?"

"Whisky sour."

"Make it two," ordered Carruthers to the blue-clad Chinese waiter. Then to Blystone: "Landed all your cargo?"

"Some of it. I've another port of call—probably Macao."

"Same cargo?"

"Yes. Agricultural machinery."

"Useful stuff. You don't happen to have any T.N.T. aboard by any chance?"

"Explosives! Not me."

"Of course. You wouldn't be anchored in the harbor and you *would* be flying the danger-flag if you had, eh? And the Japanese would be in charge."

"No need to tell me the regulations, Carruthers."

"Of course not. But it's queer that my agents tell me that a quantity of T.N.T. was landed from your ship—the *Maureen*—twenty-four hours ago."

"It's a damned lie!" growled Blystone.

"But that check, which you cashed as soon as the bank opened today. Ten thousand dollars. A comfortable trading sum."

"That's my business."

"Of course it is. I was only interested in the signature to the check—Tao Chen."

"What of it?"

"Tao Chen is a dangerous Chinaman."

"He's fighting for his country."

Carruthers shook his head.

"He's fighting for himself. We know he's in the pay of the Japanese. And nothing would suit their book better than to create an incident in the International Settlement of Shanghai. Following upon an incident, their troops would try to march in to prevent further disturbances. Then the balloon would go up."

"Seems to me if that were true, the Japs would supply him with the dynamite themselves."

Carruthers shook his head. "The innocence of a two-fisted scoundrel like you!" he exclaimed. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven! Listen: The Japanese are using explosives of their own. Any competent European chemist could hang it on them from the traces afterward. And if Tao Chen slips up, they'd have material for an 'incident' just in the secret landing of T.N.T. here. Good Lord, man, do you think you'd ever have got through with that stuff, if the Japs hadn't wanted you to?"

"I'm not interested in politics," growled Blystone.

"But I'm interested when Tao Chen buys explosives and pays over a check of ten thousand dollars to you."

"Are you accusing me of selling the stuff to the Chink?"

"I am."

"What d'you propose to do?"

Carruthers gazed through the window at the maze of shipping.

"I've sufficient information to seize your ship, the *Maureen*, and hold her on a charge of contraband. And at the same time, I could provide you with accommodation ashore—in the jail."

Blystone swallowed his drink at a gulp.

"Well, why don't you go ahead?"

Carruthers leaned forward.

"Because I don't want your damned ship. Or your own ugly person. I want the explosives that you landed. These Chinese are too fond of fireworks to be left to play with T.N.T. Where did you dump the stuff?"

John Blystone wiped the sweat from his dishonest brow.

"At the Chink's house, of course," he admitted.

Carruthers shook his head.

"No, you didn't," he said sternly. "I raided the house of Tao Chen last night. There wasn't even a Chinese cracker in the place."

A gleam of cunning came to the rheumy eyes of the skipper.

"Well, then—" he began jovially.

THE rest of his sentence was drowned in noise. The uproar came from the Bund below. Staring from the open window, the two men saw a Chinese cavalcade—a Shanghai funeral. It proceeded slowly and deliberately to a cacophony of beating cymbals, blown trumpets, and lamenting white-robed figures of mourners.

First came the professional mourners and painted boys, travesties in red and

green. They stalked and attitudinized in the fashion of figures in slow-motion movies. They trailed their white robes in the dust and filth of the road.

They were followed by a noisy and blatant brass band. The Chinese musicians, out of tune and tempo, were blaring forth an old Spanish-American war melody:

*Good-by, Dolly, I must leave you,
Though it breaks my heart to go.
Something tells me I must leave you,
For the front to fight the foe—*

Swaying to the tune and grief, behind the band came the family mourners. Then the coffin followed—an enormous palanquin affair voluminously draped. A series of poles held the palanquin, and beneath them sweated and toiled a dozen ragged coolies. These pall-bearers seemed bowed and broken in their progress. At moments, one of the mourners would leave the ranks and join the bearers. The pall-bearers were specially numerous.

"Some very important Chinaman is dead," mused Carruthers. "Who is it?" he asked the Chinese waiter who had been downstairs. The waiter placed a handbill printed in Chinese on the table. Carruthers glanced at it.

"Well, I'm damned!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" asked Blystone idly, lighting a cheroot and feeling more comfortable.

"Listen to this," said Carruthers, translating from the handbill:

"The family of Tao Chen, overwhelmed with grief, beg to inform that their father, uncle and brother died in his bed at Shanghai at one o'clock in the morning on the first moon at the age of forty-five years. The body is to be buried by his sorrowing family, who lament that they were not able to keep Tao Chen alive.

"Titles of the deceased: General. By Imperial Decree authorized to wear the fur of the great rat. Authorized to ride on horseback into the Forbidden City of Peking. Often invited to dinner at the Palace. Has received from the Emperor Wang Chao panels written in his august handwriting, cakes, handkerchiefs—"

"Tao Chen dead! Holy smoke, but that's sudden," exclaimed Blystone.

Carruthers narrowed his eyes at the slowly progressing funeral cavalcade.

"When did you last see him alive?" he asked.

"Yesterday noon," said Blystone. "He handed me that check."



Illustrated by
Austin Briggs

"I saw him alive later. At midnight, when I raided the villa. He was in perfect health."

"D'you think he killed himself, to save face?" asked Blystone.

"Tao Chen had lost face years ago," said Carruthers bitterly. "I can't believe the scoundrel is dead."

Blystone had poked his head out of the window to get a better glimpse of the shuffling pall-bearers. A soft breeze wafted the draperies of the coffin.

"That coffin!" he said aloud.

"What of it?"

"It looks uncommonly like the wooden box into which I dumped the—er—consignment, at the orders of Tao Chen."

Carruthers leaped to his feet.

"The T.N.T. They're carrying explosives into the heart of Shanghai! It isn't the body of Tao Chen at all. Now, what is in that devil's mind?"

Blystone had gone visibly pale.

"Tao Chen has an old house, overlooking the Central Square of the International Settlement," he mumbled. "That's where I took the stuff in rickshaws yesterday. And Tao Chen has a habit of sitting on his roof looking down into the square."

Carruthers stared hard at him.

"And maybe he has a rifle there too," he said. "One shot into that coffin as it reaches the center of the Settlement—and my God!"

Jake Blystone was already out of his chair and across the room.

"Where you going?" shouted Carruthers.

"To see if Tao Chen is sitting on his roof."

"You're too late. The procession will be nearly there."

"I'll take a chance."

SHANGHAI EXPLOSIVE

He scrambled down the stairs, hurled himself into a rickshaw, and left a distracted police officer visualizing carnage and an incident that would make Shanghai again a war-center of the East. . . .

It was a mad, foreign devil who urged a rickshaw coolie with curses and blows along the Bund of Shanghai and through the sacred congestion of a funeral procession. They arrived in Central Square. Leaving the panting, sweating coolie bowed in exhaustion between the shafts, Blystone entered a house and plunged up a steep staircase. A servant tried to bar his way, but was left stunned at the foot of the stairs.

Emerging upon the red-tiled roof of the high house, the skipper gazed about him. In the distance he could hear the advancing funeral procession. Then he saw the shaven-headed Tao Chen, who was garbed in a black robe, crouching against the edge of the roof. A rifle nestled against his cheek, and was slanting downward. The oblique eyes had narrowed into slits, and were sighted on the advancing coffin and its crowd of sweating, staggering coolies.

A lean yellow finger was crooked about the trigger of the rifle.

Blystone leaped. He was on Tao Chen before the Chinaman had a chance to use his rifle. They grappled and swayed. The blaring of the band was in their ears.

Tao Chen tried to use his strangler's hands, but the skipper of the *Maureen* was taking no chances. He brought his knee with a jerk into the stomach of the Chinaman. With a whine of agony, Tao Chen doubled up, swayed—and the next moment had plunged with a scream into the square beneath.

Panting, Blystone lay flat on the tiles. At last he forced himself to the edge and gazed below. The funeral procession had stopped; the painted boys and the professional mourners were staring in astonishment at a dead and broken Tao Chen who had fallen from the blue sky.

With sighs of relief the pall-bearers had put down the coffin. . . .

"Well, you saved your face, anyhow," said Carruthers later, to the skipper. "I'm giving you clearing orders for your ship, but I'm not certain that I shouldn't hold you on a charge of murder."

Blystone indicated the handbill which lay on the police officer's desk.

"You can't murder a dead man," he said. "And so far as you know, Tao Chen died at one o'clock this morning."



Live

Illustrated by
Edgar Whitney

Tuesday at the Etruria:

GROPING, John Craig took an aisle seat on the rear row. The house was less than half filled at this early matinée hour. Because his eyes were as yet unaccustomed to the dark, Craig assumed the seat next to him to be vacant. Only when he laid his hat in a woman's lap did he become aware of his error.

"Pardon," Craig murmured. He withdrew the hat hastily.

Still unable to see anything clearly except the lighted screen down front, he could not tell whether the woman was young or old, dowdy or chic. She did not respond to his apology.

Craig settled himself to enjoy the picture, which was a comedy hit. Possibly it was because the lady at his left did not laugh, when everyone else did, that Craig again glanced toward her. By now his eyes were focused to the rear-row gloom. His neighbor, he made out, was young and comely. Moreover, it struck Craig that he had somewhere seen her before.

Which was odd, since he was a complete stranger in this West Coast city. Only this morning he had arrived by train from the East. Puzzling over this,



Bait

*A detective story which—
believe it or not—has a
distinct element of novelty.*

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

John Craig next became aware that the young woman wasn't looking at the picture at all. Her head was back, and she was staring obliquely upward at nothing. Craig saw a teardrop gleaming like a pearl in the dusk, on her cheek.

It was clear to him that she'd come here to be alone with some bitter sorrow. And he, Craig, had blundered in to lay his hat on her lap. A sense of embarrassment made him consider moving across the aisle. But that, he decided, would be too conspicuous. He was here. So he would stay here and be careful not to notice her again.

Yet the unread page of tragedy, close to him in the dimness, absorbed him. He could feel its tension at his elbow. He looked again, covertly. . . . She was lovely, he thought. Why was he sure he had seen her somewhere before?

When finally she arose to leave, John Craig skewed his knees to let her go by.

Then, after a discreet wait, he went out himself. Stepping into the light of day, he heard boys calling extras.

"Barbara Taylor acquitted!" they shouted. "Read all about it!"

Of course! That, Craig knew, accounted for his impression of having seen her before. On trial for her hus-

band's murder, Barbara Taylor had been on all front pages these past weeks.

Craig now bought the latest extra. Her picture was there, just as he had seen it in the morning edition. He saw now that acquittal had come early this afternoon.

A morbid group was in the Etruria foyer. Near Craig a voice said: "That was her! She just came out."

"I knew she'd get off," another voice prated. "These juries'll let a good-looking dame go free, every time!"

With a throb of sympathy Craig imagined her escaping from the courtroom, two hours ago, pursued by reporters and cameras into the first dark, quiet haven where she could be alone:

The rear row, here at the Etruria.

Wednesday at the Evander.

THE Evander was just around the corner from the Etruria. When he bought a ticket and went in, Craig hardly thought she'd be there. "Of course I won't," she had said to him over the phone, with natural indignation.

He groped his way in, as yesterday, and took an aisle seat of the rear row. Immediately he could feel her presence by him.

"I'm the man who sat next to you at the Etruria yesterday," he whispered. "This morning I telephoned you, saying: 'I'm not a reporter, a detective or a crank. I'm simply an honest stranger with an idea. Take the same seat at the same hour this afternoon, only at the Evander instead of the Etruria, and I'll try to help you.'"

Barbara Taylor kept her profile rigidly toward him. She answered: "I said I wouldn't come, but here I am. What brought me is a faint suspicion that you know who really killed my husband. Do you? There's no other way you can help me, of course."

"I do not know who did it." Although only a sprinkling of patronage was present, and only the two of them seated near the rear, Craig spoke barely above a whisper.

"Did *you*, by any chance?" She turned to look for the first time at his face, there in the gloom. She saw strong lean lines from jaw to forehead, and eyes aglow with sincerity.

He answered: "On the date of the crime I was living three thousand miles from here, in New England. I arrived on the West Coast for the first time only yesterday."

"Then since you can't possibly know anything about it, I'll be going. It was stupid of me to come, of course, but I was just that desperate." Abruptly she stood up to leave.

"Please don't," he urged, "until you hear my plan."

She hesitated. In the end the earnestness of his appeal made her sit down.

"It's a very simple plan," he said, "requiring only that you occupy this seat every other day for the next week or so; and on alternate days you occupy a similar seat at the Etruria."

"Are you quite sane?" she asked. "Or do you own these two show-houses? Are you trying to advertise them? Draw crowds?"

"I'm simply trying to acquit you."

"I'm already acquitted."

"By twelve jurymen, yes. But by twelve million laymen, you'll be on trial for the rest of your life. It's something you can't run away from. Always there'll be raised eyebrows. Hushed voices whenever you enter a room."

She gave him a searching look, then nodded wearily. "I found that out last night—when friends dropped in to congratulate me. There was a question-mark in every eye. Oh, it was ghastly!

'She got off,' they were thinking, 'but how do we know she didn't do it?'"

"So you mustn't retreat," Craig said urgently. "You must stand—and fight."

"How? By meeting a strange man every day on the dark rear row of a picture show?"

"The idea," he insisted, "has angles."

"Perfectly scandalous angles," she admitted derisively. "Don't you know what they'll say?"

"Yes, I know quite what they'll say. A world whispering behind your back will have even more cause to whisper. Especially if we make it very clandestine. You always arrive five minutes before I, and leave the theater alone. A daily tryst you do not wish known, but which for that very reason is even more sure to become known and discussed."

"For whose benefit?"

"The murderer's. There is one, you know. We don't know who he is. We haven't even a theory."

"The murderer," asserted Barbara Taylor, "couldn't possibly be interested in what appears to be my rather sordid rear-row romance with a stranger. It's all entirely too wild to be considered. So I'll be going now."

She rose and brushed past him.

"I'll explain further," Craig said with all the appeal he could muster, "tomorrow at the Etruria."

"I sha'n't be there," she answered frigidly, and was gone.

Thursday at the Etruria.

AN even chance he'd find her, thought Craig as he bought a ticket at the Etruria. For one thing, there was the element of a woman's normal curiosity. And for another, by now she would have had time to think this thing through. If she had put herself in the murderer's mind, carefully considering cause and effect, she might see that the scheme wasn't so wild, after all.

Feeling his way to the rear aisle seat, John Craig sat down.

He said nothing until her outline grew in the darkness. Then, when he saw she was wearing a veil, he whispered: "Excellent. For a clandestine rendezvous, the veil makes a nice touch."

"Nothing of the sort," she said. "It's windy out, that's all. Now if you'll please explain further—"

"First, let's see if I've got facts straight: I've gone over back files in the newspapers, and it seems to be like this: You and your husband—"

"Speak lower, please."

"—were incompatibly married, and for some time had occupied opposite wings of the house. On the night of his murder, Dan Taylor came home late, intoxicated, in a taxicab, let himself in and staggered up to his room. The house was locked tightly, every door and window. It was the servant's night off. In the morning Dan Taylor was found, fully dressed, on his bed, dead—asphyxiated. The gas-log fireplace in his room was on full tilt, not lighted. The only fingerprint on the gas-valve was your own. Admittedly none but the two of you could have been inside that locked house. It couldn't have been suicide, because then his fingerprint would have been on the gas-valve."

"That," Barbara admitted, "was the State's case. They introduced, of course, my expectancy to inherit, and my discontent as his wife. My defense was that I heard Dan come in, and in a few minutes went to his room. An invitation had arrived for a dinner to be given the next day, in honor of our fifth wedding anniversary. I wanted to discuss with Dan whether we should accept. But I found him on the bed, drunk and asleep. Earlier in the evening the gas fireplace there had been lighted to take off the March chill. The room was now too hot. So I simply turned off the gas and withdrew."

"On which defense," Craig resumed, "you were acquitted. Leaving the courtroom, you escaped crowds by coming in here. The fact that a strange man came in a few minutes later and sat down beside you was presumably noticed."

"Why should it have been noticed?"

"If she's just been on trial for her husband's murder, nothing a beautiful woman does escapes notice."

"I suppose not," Barbara agreed bitterly.

"Nor will it have escaped attention that now for three successive days you've been joined on a dark rear row by that same man."

"I wonder," Barbara said, "if that's why my most catty friend called me up this morning. She asked very sweetly if I'd seen 'The Pink Dragon.'"

Craig nodded. "'The Pink Dragon' was on at the Evander yesterday."

"Was it? I didn't notice."

"It was. Something else occurred, too, the instant you were freed from the courtroom."

That drew her attention and made her face him. "Something else? What?"

"Man-hunting machinery began grinding again. I mean the police began looking for some one else to convict. Automatically they were off in full cry again, after unknown guilt. A certainty which is bound to fret the actual murderer."

Fortunately she was still facing him. For a news-reel was on, one of the screened scenes showing Barbara Taylor herself emerging from the courthouse day before yesterday. From a corner of his worried eye, Craig actually saw her evading cameras as she started away.

When the scene passed without Barbara looking that way, Craig drew a breath of relief.

"You haven't any idea," she was asking, "who the murderer is?"

"Not the foggiest. We can be sure, however, that he's on pins and needles to have the case dropped. He knows it won't be dropped until some one is convicted. Therefore he wants to see somebody, other than himself, convicted. He'll even feel a little easier, I imagine, when he hears the police have flushed another suspect."

"What suspect?"

"Anyone. Your present companion, for instance," Craig said.

She was shocked. "You won't help me that way. You only make it worse."

"Not if the murderer reacts the way I hope he will."

"What do you expect him to do?"

"Trust me, won't you? And see how things work out?"

She sat for a while in strained silence. Customers passed each way along the aisle, and the rear seats began filling.

When the feature concluded and a cartoon came on, Barbara whispered: "You haven't told me why you're doing this."

Craig smiled. "I've three good reasons. Perhaps I'll tell you one or two of them—tomorrow at the Evander."

Friday at the Evander:

SHE was not there. Craig slipped into the end seat and waited with only faint hope. She'd been alarmed, he supposed, by that tittle-tattle columnist.

But when the afternoon was nearly spent, Barbara Taylor did come in. Craig stood up to let her take the inner seat. She was alarmed. "I just came," she whispered nervously, "to warn you. To tell you what it said in that horrid column headed 'Over the Transom.'"

"I read it," Craig told her. "It said: 'Folks who know their way around haven't failed to observe that a certain

charming young widow knew right where to seek consolation, after the verdict! How long has this been going on? Did her late husband know about it, we wonder?"

Barbara hid her face. Her shoulders shivered. "It's beastly!" she murmured. "I'm going now. And of course I won't ever come here again."

"You must," Craig urged. "Don't quit. The only thing that counts, after all, is your own conscience. You know you didn't have an affair with me before your husband's death, and you're not having one now. Yet it will be to our advantage if the murderer jumps to those very assumptions. If we carry on long enough, he will."

"And then?"

"The police will, too. They'll start watching me. A slim case, yes, but they overlook nothing."

"But even then I don't see—"

"Try to see like the murderer. He sees a nice convenient scapegoat against whom there's only a weak case, and yet whom the police have an eye on. This new suspect,—myself,—lives in a hotel room. He's a mystery-man. No one knows anything about him. To get a line on him, ultimately the police may search his hotel room. If they should find something incriminating there, the weak case would become strong."

Barbara turned with big, startled eyes. "You mean you've planted something in your room?"

"No. But when I come here to meet you, I always leave the room unlocked. Nothing to keep the murderer from planting something there. For instance, suppose Dan Taylor had been killed with a gun. The murderer quite easily could plant the murder gun in my room."

"But there was no gun—"

"True. I just mentioned it as a parallel for the murderer's strategy. Any contact he makes with me, no matter what or how, will give us a lead."

"If he does anything at all, he'll get you in trouble."

"No, he'll get himself in trouble. Because I've posted a watcher across the hall from my room."

She concentrated on this, for a moment, then said: "Perhaps you're overestimating. I mean—perhaps people aren't paying so much attention to us, after all."

"Alert people are—like police and reporters. A man from the *Record* tried to interview me this morning. He asked

bluntly how long I've known Mrs. Barbara Taylor. I simply retreated in apparent confusion."

The rear rows were filling up, and they couldn't talk any more. When she arose to go, Craig whispered: "It'll take courage from now on. I'll know you have it—if I see you tomorrow at the Etruria."

Saturday at the Etruria:

SLIPPING into the seat beside her, Craig said: "A thin, oldish man with square toes followed me here. I think he's a plain-clothes detective."

They were both aware, a moment later, of a figure in the aisle beside them. An usher tried to lead this patron down front. But he took a seat across the aisle.

"The detective," Craig whispered. "For his benefit, perhaps I'd better hold your hand."

He took Barbara's hand. It was as cold as ice. The man across the aisle observed them covertly.

Craig made sure his whisperings weren't heard. "I think," he suggested, "we'd better go to the Gem tomorrow, over on Market Street. It'll look as if we're trying to escape."

After a long silence, Barbara said: "You forgot to tell me just why you're doing all this."

"For one reason, because no one else can. It takes a stranger for the rôle. Any old friend of yours wouldn't do. Too easy to establish where he was on the night of Dan's death. In my case, the past is a complete blank."

"And for another reason?"

"Back East I was an attorney. I failed to win cases. Got discouraged and came West to make a fresh start. To make a fresh start, I need a client."

"I'm the client you make this *fresh* start with?"

He ignored the emphasis and said soberly: "No. I myself will be my own client when they charge me with murder. Don't worry. With a three-thousand-mile alibi, I can't lose."

She was breathless for a moment. Then: "You spoke of three reasons. The third?"

"Sh!" Craig warned. "I'm afraid that fellow might hear us. Wait until tomorrow at the Gem."

Sunday at the Gem.

THE Sunday crowd, packing the house even to the rear row, kept them from saying anything at all except:

"I've just remembered," Barbara whispered with a nervous laugh, "that I don't even know your name."

"And I," Craig smiled, "have just remembered that I've only seen you in the dark."

"If you ever see me in the light, you'll be terribly disappointed."

"I'll take a bet on that," said Craig.

Monday at the Evander:

HE did not appear. Barbara sat alone through the entire show, then went worriedly out.

On the street they were crying extras. Headlines made Barbara gasp. A man named Craig had been arrested for the murder of Dan Taylor.

Curtain at the Etruria:

IN this first ten minutes after his acquittal, exactly as Barbara had done after her own, John Craig groped his way to a seat in the dark rear row.

A soft hand touched his elbow. "I wanted to be at the trial, of course," Barbara whispered. "But you sent word for me to stay away."

He couldn't see her very well yet. But in her presence he relaxed contentedly.

"Tell me about it, please," she urged.

"State sprung a jeweled wrist-watch," Craig explained. "They'd found it hidden in my mattress."

"They had traced this?"

"Yes—to an uptown jeweler who was introduced as a witness. He testified that on the evening of Dan Taylor's murder, a customer entered his shop asking for a gift suitable for his wife's fifth wedding anniversary. The wrist-watch was selected, and paid for with cash from a fat wallet. Witness was shown a photograph of Dan Taylor, and he identified Dan as the customer. State's intimation was that I, your secret companion, had been with you that night when Dan came home. That we heard him come in. That you went in there, as you had testified at the first trial, and turned off lighted gas. And that later, after leaving you, I went in there, turned the gas on, helped myself to both the fat wallet and the jeweled gift, and left."

"And then?"

"As my own attorney, I exploded the case with a three-thousand-mile alibi. Then I introduced my own witness."

"The watcher you'd posted across from your hotel room?"

Craig nodded. "Who saw the real culprit plant something in my mattress.



"Dan being under the influence, the taxi-driver helped him to his room."

And who tagged this fellow to discover he was a taxi-driver. That angle was all we needed. Police are grilling the taxi-driver now. He'll crack under pressure, of course, and admit he drove Dan home that night. The fat wallet would have been exposed when Dan paid his cab fare."

"Of course!" she said breathlessly. "So you think—"

"I'm certain, and so's everyone else—now. Dan being under the influence, the taxi-driver helped him up to his room. When Dan collapsed on the bed, the taxi-driver rolled him. You came in, and the man stepped out of sight in a closet. He saw you turn off the gas—and saw how he himself could escape being accused the next day by Dan. Simply turned on the gas with his driver's glove on—and slipped out."

"Oh!" Barbara stared straight ahead, her face as immobile as white marble in the gloom.

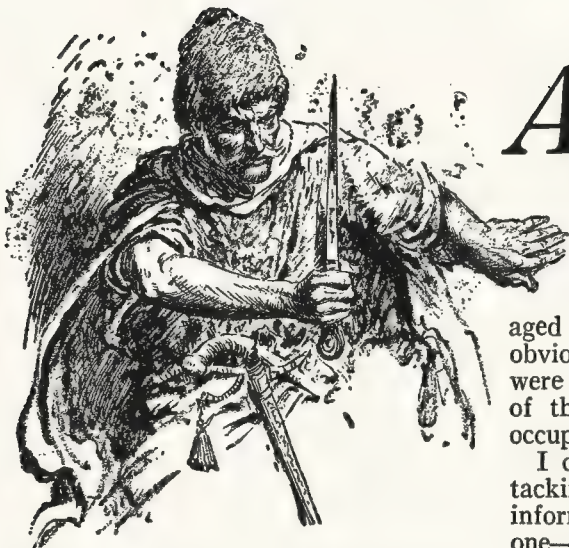
"So it's acquittal not only for you, and me," Craig said, "but even for Dan Taylor."

"Yes, even for Dan," she murmured gratefully. "He remembered the day and brought me that gift—" Her voice broke.

"Shall I go now," Craig asked, "or shall I stay long enough to tell you the third reason why I've wanted to be with you each day."

"Stay," she said, "but don't tell me—now."

They sat the show through until the final curtain. And this time they went out, into the light of a friendly day, together.



An Affair

By THOMAS

THE Caucasus is about the sole country remaining where knight-hood is, in a manner of speaking, still in flower. Partitioned into a thousand almost inaccessible valleys by the towering mountains, and populated by approximately two score different nationalities all steeped in age-old hates and prejudices, it is bound by feuds, and by blood-claims, like no other region.

The Caucasian's honor is as quaintly vulnerable as that of a pre-war New Orleans gentleman, his code of behavior as austere as that which governed the deportment of King Arthur's knights, and almost equally archaic. . . .

Georgia, major country of the Caucasus, was an independent republic for a brief period after its Russian masters forgot empire and started a civil war. But the World War allies maintained for more than two years an army of occupation in the Caucasus—Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and lesser states. British Tommies,—and I was one, although a native Texan,—after four years of fighting were converted into policemen.

It was in my new rôle of cop that I was ordered one night to Akhalkaliki, an inland Georgian village, to quell a riot. We took to horse and trotted off into the mountains under the guidance of a badly frightened Greek charcoal-burner.

The riot had started in the early morning, but continued in unabated fury until we arrived. Ragged volleys and random shots rattled and spat in the dark, echoing and reëchoing from the surrounding mountains until there was all the noise of a major engagement. It was with considerable surprise, therefore, that I learned this was a one-man riot! That is to say, there was but one man on one side, although there were easily one hundred on the other, exclusive of a dozen band-

aged casualties, and four men who were obviously quite dead. The hundred men were distributed discreetly about the yard of the local barracks. The lone man occupied the barracks.

I conferred with members of the attacking party. The embattled one, I was informed, had taken umbrage when some one—nobody, it developed, was quite sure who—had kicked a mongrel dog. The lone warrior—his identity was equally mysterious—had remonstrated with the kicker, who responded by politely inquiring whether the dog was a relative. This insolence, it appeared, merited but one reply—the dog-lover unholstered his revolver and shot the dog-baiter dead.

One thing led to another. The justice of the killer's act became the subject of heated debate, in the course of which he killed two brothers of the first man and a second cousin. Six others had also lost their lives in ineffectual argument, but being Moslems, had been hastily interred before sundown. The four I had noticed were awaiting Christian burial in a more leisurely tradition. Ten men killed and a dozen painfully wounded, because one man had kicked a stray dog! I expressed my astonishment through the interpreter, and was immediately further astonished when half a dozen voices of the killer's erstwhile enemies were raised in his defense. It was entirely a matter of personal honor, they assured me.

I deputized every man within sight, and we stormed the barracks. Not a shot was fired to dispute our advance.

The rear of the barracks structure overlooked a cliff-like slope, and there were no windows in the lower floor on that side. From the second-floor windows the escape appeared impossible to me. But when I had clambered up the rocks from below, I knew the murderer had eluded us by that suicidal leap down the precipice. His knife had somehow been ripped off, belt and all, and I found it glinting in the moonlight. It was the sole clue.

"Glinting" is an understatement. The Caucasian *kindjal*, that long dagger every Georgian wears slung on the front of his belted national costume, is always decorative; but never before or since have I

of Honor

L. WALDREN

In this department readers and writers meet to tell true stories of their own most memorable hours. (For details of our Real Experience contest, see page 3.) First an Anglo-American adventurer in the Caucasus tells of a Georgian chieftain on the warpath.

seen one upon which such fine workmanship had been lavished. The haft was of flawless ivory, mellowed with age and so closely inlaid with fine gold wire that the design defies description. The scabbard was overlaid with black leather and bound with intricate gold hasps incrustated with niello work. At the tip was a tiny ivory sphere also beautifully inlaid with gold. The blade, needless to add, was excellent steel, cleverly damascened and in every way worthy of its rich scabbard. The buckle and dangling tabs of the narrow rawhide belt was enriched with gold and niello. It was a museum piece, and I could imagine what the companion-pieces would be like—the *kazierki* (decorative cartridge-cases worn across the breasts), the sword, ivory rifle-butt, pistol-grips and gold-mounted boot-straps.

The ownership of such a fine and expensive outfit argued wealth of the wearer, or at least noble lineage. However, for all the information I could extract from the man's late enemies, his identity was as great a mystery as ever.

SO the gold-and-ivory *kindjal* became the nucleus of a valuable collection of Caucasian arms I acquired after my discharge from the British army and return to Georgia as the civilian employee of an American oil company. Much as I admired and cherished it, however, I never summoned sufficient courage to display it on the wall with my other items.

Often I took it from its drawer in my library safe, and as often as I drew the long keen blade from its scabbard, I read the legend etched in the bright steel—"I am the tongue of Izrafel." Izrafel, the sweet-voiced angel of fate and death, the messenger of Allah who summons men to Gehenna or to paradise! On the other side was inscribed: "*Mountain with mountain never meets, but man may always meet with man.*" Always I wondered which side bore the truer message.

Several months after the riot of which I write, I met Achmed Bey Kikava, a cultured Adjarian nobleman and a former centurion of horse—and as his friend I was admitted places seldom visited by an outsider. Later I married a girl re-

motely related to Achmed Bey, and it was natural he should stand godfather to our first child, a son.

Achmed Bey, as befitted the occasion, was dressed in Georgian costume with full panoply of arms. I was at once attracted by his *kazierki*, *kindjal*, sword, belt and pistol-grips, mounted with gold-incrustated ivory, and as rare and beautiful as my *kindjal*—except his knife, which was less ornate than the other pieces.

Custom dictates that the father give the godfather a handsome gift. Therefore, before the feasting began, I called Achmed Bey into the library; and taking my *kindjal* from the safe, I put it into his hands. Now I was *kanak*, or kinsman, the exchange of a knife or other weapon was not only safe but highly appropriate. It betokens trust, for it is believed in the Caucasus that a man may be certainly killed if struck with his own knife or fired upon with one of his own bullets.

Achmed Bey turned the *kindjal* about in his hands, drew it caressingly from its scabbard and read aloud the Arabic inscriptions. Sheathing it, he belted it about his waist. "A perfect match," he said with significant emphasis.

"Then you—" I stammered.

"Yes, I was the man you went to arrest at Akhalkaliki," he said. "I couldn't tell you when we first became friends; you were still in the army, and might have thought it your duty to arrest me."

"Hardly!" I exclaimed. "But surely you might have told me later."

My embarrassed friend tried to explain: "You never told that story without marveling that a man could kill ten others and wound as many more because, as you always put it, one man kicked a stray dog. I was afraid you would not understand."

"Well, I understand less now than before," I told him. "Why, you dislike dogs. Did you like this particular one?"

"No, *kanak*, it was not that." Achmed Bey strove mightily to reach my Occidental mind. "It was, one might say, a matter of personal honor. No, I loved that dog as little as another. But the man—I loved him even less."



Siberian Trader

A narrow escape indeed, from death in the icy waters of Siberia.

By CAPTAIN OLAF SWENSON

IN the spring of 1912 the Hibbard-Stewart Company of Seattle, dealers in wool, hides and furs, invited me to join them in a trading venture. The next year we formed the Hibbard-Swenson Company—, a partnership which lasted until 1921—, and bought the *Belvedere*, retaining Captain Cottle in command.

In addition to actual trading we bought huge quantities of fur and ivory for cash. The ivory was largely walrus tusks, but there was always a considerable supply of mastodon and mammoth ivory too, which originated in the north central part of Siberia.

This fossil ivory crop is one of the most amazing phenomena of the North. Mastodons and mammoths must have roamed the plains of Siberia in great numbers, for the glaciers are still pouring forth mastodon remains in sufficient quantities to make tusks of definite commercial interest. The natives, of course, do not know that the tusks which they carefully gather and save to sell to the traders have come from an animal which was extinct long before recorded history began, and explain the presence of the ivory by a belief that it comes from an animal which lives in the bowels of the earth and comes near the surface to die. After its death, they think, the remains are spewed forth by the glaciers. . . .

Once I almost lost my life in the icy waters which break on the west shore of Kamchatka. It was a spring day; we had left ship in a launch, to land for an hour or two, and had taken with us a small sealing boat, for we knew that we would not be able to beach the launch in the heavy surf. The chief engineer, a young Scotchman, George, two Portuguese sailors and I started out. We landed all right and spent about an hour ashore, drinking tea and talking. When we got back to

the sealing boat, taking with us a Russian who wanted to go aboard, we found the tide had fallen while the sea had risen, and the breakers were even worse.

Anton, one of our Portuguese boat-steerers, was handling the boat, and I was pulling the bow oar, with the chief engineer, George and the sailor at the others. Anton was a fine boatman, but he may have become confused. We were away from the beach and well through the surf, when Anton yelled "Pull!" We pulled with all our might, because it was no time to question his judgment. But the breaker hit us at an angle, and over we went into water pouring in from a glacier-fed river—literally ice-water.

George, in a complete panic, cried out that he couldn't swim, and I swam to him and got him to where he could hang on to the boat. Then we all tried to right the boat, but it was impossible. As soon as we'd get it over, filled with water as it was, one of the men would try to climb in, and it would turn over like a barrel. I knew no man could stand that marrow-freezing water for long. So I suggested that we swim to the launch, which was two or three hundred yards away. But a strong tide was running, and it carried me parallel to the shore.

Turning, I saw that three of the others had started swimming for shore, and that George and the Russian were hanging to the upturned boat. It was only about an eighth of a mile, but against that tide, and in that freezing water, it seemed an infinite distance through which to swim. Already I was getting cramps in my arms and stomach from the icy water, and I knew that if I did not get to shore quickly I never would get there alive.

And then, I was in the midst of a huge breaker, its foam seething over my head. But I did have presence of mind

enough to hold my nose and keep my mouth shut while the water was over my head, for I knew if that icy water got inside my stomach I'd be done for.

I have one other memory of that hell in the icy water. When my feet finally touched bottom near the beach, I found that I couldn't stand up and had to go on swimming in water that was no more than four feet deep. As I turned, I saw big Anton, who was over six feet tall and a strong swimmer, about to walk out. But he stood facing the sea and yelling something in Portuguese to the other sailor, who was his cousin, and who was swimming close behind him. Then, for some reason the cousin started to swim back to the boat; Anton plunged into the icy water and swam back after him.

When I finally got to a point at which my knees touched sand, I found that there was a terrible undertow which began pulling me out to sea again, and it

took the last ounce of strength I had to crawl up the beach on all fours. The Russian whom we had come ashore to visit was running toward me along the beach. I staggered to my feet for a moment and waved at him. Then, without any conscious reason, I took my watch out, broke the chain, and threw it away.

The Russian pulled off my heavy woolen shirt and my boots, and put a sheepskin coat on me. Then, my arm around his shoulders, he walked me, half conscious, up to the shack, about a quarter-mile. There he undressed me and put me into a sleeping-bag. I passed out.

When I came to, I saw the chief engineer standing beside me. He looked at me and said: "Now who doesn't believe in Providence?" I asked him where the other boys were, and he said that they were down on the beach; but that was a kindly lie to keep from shocking me. . . . The others were all drowned.

GENTLEMEN UNAFRAID

(Continued from page 6)

I was led out of the room into the courtyard of the prison. My three companions were haled from the cell. They had again been questioned; and to their eternal credit, had upheld my story, declaring that I was a stranger and not connected with the insurrecto army.

We were ordered to stand against the patio wall. A squad of uniformed soldiers marched to the court and were halted before us. I realized that we were up against that time-honored institution, the firing-squad. During the wars in Mexico I have seen scores of Mexicans executed, but I have never seen one show cowardice. It seems a part of their code to die gracefully and defiantly. Usually they light a cigarette, and pose jauntily before their executioners. But I was determined that I would not bow politely! I would go out fighting; I could get one punch at a soldier before I was killed!

A young lieutenant, scarcely more than a boy, was in command of the squad. He ordered our sergeant to walk some steps aside and stand against the wall. The sergeant did so with a wave of farewell. At the command, a volley was fired, and the sergeant fell backward like a log. The cigarette he was smoking flipped from his mouth and fell on his chest. I saw a wisp of smoke arise as it burnt a hole in his shirt. The lieutenant knocked it off with his hand, put his

Luger pistol to the victim's head, and fired the shot of mercy.

The Yaqui Indian was next. He died without a change of expression in his face. Things looked rather blue for me. I picked out the fat *coronel* in command as the one I would charge when my turn came. He stood grinning at his victims.

Other officers gathered around him, and there was a murmured conference. Then the third soldier and myself were ordered back to the cell. For the moment we were reprieved. A short time later they again took the soldier from the cell, beat him with a quirt, and tried to force him to confess that I was a rebel. He steadfastly refused to betray me.

About noon we were again led into the patio, and the firing-squad marched in. The soldier was stood against the wall, and died with the inevitable cigarette in his lips. Then they started work on me. I was cursed and abused, motioned against the wall, and motioned back, and made to repeat my story.

For the second time I was returned to the cell. For several hours I sat on the floor trying desperately to think of a way of escape, but there was no chance. About mid-afternoon I was again marched into the patio, and for the third time that day stood before the firing-squad.

While I was wearily repeating my story, decorating it with details, an

officer that I had not seen before walked up to the group; and a chill ran down my spine. He was Captain Fermin Ochoa, who knew me well. We had served together against the Red Flaggers, and had fought in the battle of Ojitas. I had taught him how to handle a machine-gun, and we had been good friends. Now we were enemies.

He nodded his head slightly, and I knew he recognized me. Well, it was all over. He would of course identify me. But for a moment he stood listening, then walked away.

For the third time I was marched back to the cell. For some reason he had decided not to give me up. I was reprieved, but certainly sooner or later the wall would be the end of the trail.

THAT evening for the first time they brought me food—beans and a cup of water. I had passed a nerve-racking day, but I was dog-tired, and that night I slept stretched out on the earthen floor. In the morning the garrison aroused and went about their routine duties.

After breakfast a group of prisoners from other cells were marched out under guard and started to clean the quarters. The officer of the guard came to inspect the cells. It was my former *compañero* Captain Ochoa. He called the sergeant of the guard.

"Why is this Yankee loafing? Why is he not at work?" he demanded.

"There were no orders," answered the sergeant.

"Take him out. Give him a broom and make him work. He is no better than the others," the Captain shouted.

I was given a broom and set to work sweeping out the cells. A faint hope came to me. Although the Captain had cursed me in anger, he had winked at me in what seemed a friendly fashion.

An armed guard lounged near, watching my every move. A few minutes later Captain Ochoa again walked by. "Bring that Yankee over to the guardroom, and make him sweep up," he ordered.

I was brought to the room where the officers of the guard lounged when on duty. I swept the floor slowly, trying to kill time. The Captain entered some minutes later, and ordered the guard to stand outside the door. Cursing me loudly, he smiled and motioned me into the inner room.

"We were good comrades, O'Reilly," he whispered. "You were my good friend in time of trouble. I will give you a

fighting chance for your life, as one soldier to another."

He handed me a pair of worn *guarachs*,—the leather-thonged sandals worn by the peons,—a ragged woolen poncho and an old straw sombrero. Motioning for silence, he led me through another room to a door opening into a second patio, where the soldiers of the guard were quartered with their *soldaderas*, or women camp-followers.

"You look like a *pelado*," he said. "Walk across the patio behind those blankets hanging on the line. There is a door there opening into the street. It is unlocked. That is all I can do. Go with God. Take this."

He handed me a forty-five pistol, and waved me on.

The one chance in a thousand had come to me. With the poncho wrapped around my shoulders, and the hat pulled down over my eyes, I shuffled across the yard. Soldiers and their women were seated around fires chatting and eating, but no one seemed to notice me. I found the door and peered out.

The street was deserted, save for a charcoal-vendor and his laden burros. I slipped into the street and strolled around a corner. It was a jumpy minute. I expected to hear the alarm any second, but at least I would have a chance to fight. I was afraid to run, but shuffled along until I passed the outposts. I know they saw me, but other peon farmers were coming and going to their fields, and I was not noticed. When I was sure I had passed the line, you may be sure I went into high gear.

LATE that afternoon I came to the railroad. I was almost exhausted as I stumbled down the track toward where I knew the insurgent camp must be. Working on the track was a Mexican gang of section-hands. Beside the track was a hand-car. I made the native foreman and two of his men put the hand-car on the track—and had a welcome ride down to our lines. . . .

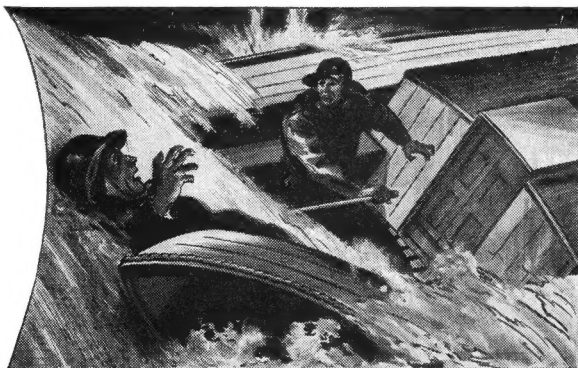
Often when I hear people sneering at other races and nationalities, and cussing the "spiggoties," I remember with gratitude the graceful act of Captain Ochoa, who risked his life to save me. With reverence I remember the three soldiers who refused to betray me, in the face of death. Illiterate, ignorant peons though they were, they died gallantly, gentlemen unafraid. Across the years I send them a salute, "as one soldier to another."

"GOODBYE WORLD! MY SHIP FADED INTO THE NIGHT!"



① "My 40-foot sloop was footing it up Long Island Sound like a scared cat before a stiff sou'-west breeze," writes Tom Meyer of 280 Bronxville Road, Bronxville, N. Y. "At midnight..."

OVERBOARD IN STORM, YACHTSMAN CLINGS TO CAPSIZED DORY AS SLOOP HOLDS COURSE



② ...off Smithtown Bay, it really began to blow. My partner, Larry Starr, was asleep below, and I gave the tiller to a friend who had done no sailing before, so I could get the dinghy in on deck before it got away from us. Then, with the darn thing half-way on board a big comber pounded over the stern, swept my feet out from under me and overboard I went, weighted down with boots and oilskins. I still clung to the dinghy, but its line had parted and my ship faded quickly into the black night!

③ "The lad at the tiller didn't know how to bring the ship about, and although he would wake Larry, they'd be too far away to ever find me in that roaring darkness.

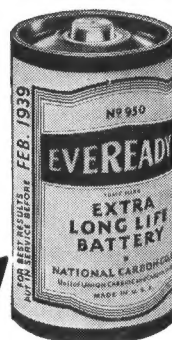
"I was growing numb with cold. I couldn't hang on much longer. I rolled against the gunwale of the dinghy for a fresh grip on the world that was slipping away from me. Something hard dug into my side... the flashlight in my pocket! Soaked, though it was, here was a chance!



④ "I pressed the switch. A finger of light stabbed through the storm. Time dragged on as I played the light about me. I cursed my shipmates. 'Why can't the fools see my light?' and then...the beam caught the white sail! I screamed for joy. An arm waved encouragement. Minutes later, thanks to those *fresh* DATED 'Eveready' batteries that kept working under the toughest conditions imaginable, I was warm and happy in my own bunk on my own ship, our Block Island cruise resumed.

(Signed)

Tom Meyer



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Successful people advise
"Let up...*light up a Camel*"



RALPH GULDAHL (above), U.S. Open golf champion, reveals an "inside" story. "I've learned to ease up now and again—to let up...and light up a Camel. Little breaks in daily nerve tension help to keep a fellow on top. Smoking a Camel is actually *soothing* to my nerves!"

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